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The Multiple Layers of the Local
A Geographical-Historical Approach to Defining the Local

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Conference on

Chinese and Comparative Historical Thinking in the 21st Century

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This will be a paper on the intertwining of history and geography, the changing representation of spatiotemporal data in the past, and the implications for the future development of computational geography or “geographic information systems” (GIS) in historical studies. It will draw examples of historical geography from a particular period (the middle period in Chinese history, from the mid eighth century to the sixteenth) both because changes took place then in the manner of historical geography and geographical history that had implications for later periods. It will use many examples from a particular place (Wuzhou 婺州, later known as Jinhua fu 金華府, in modern Zhejiang province) because I have been doing a case study of this place and because any discussion of the representation of place and space needs over time to be grounded somewhere. It happens that several geographically minded scholars lived there and some of their work is cited, although this is not essential to the argument developed in this paper. Finally it will introduce the China Historical GIS project as a particular approach to historical studies, both because it is the work of scholars at Fudan University where this conference is being held and because it is a tool that will help us accomplish some of the things historical study needs to address if we wish to gain a national perspective on the local and a local perspective on the national. But first, a proposition.

A Proposition

This is my proposition: it is a good thing to contest the writing of history as the history of a Chinese “nation” because, first, in practice national historiography privileges governmental structures as the narrative core of history; second, because it is anachronistic; and, third, because it is ideological without being self-critical. The problem with privileging the governmental structure is that it obscures historical developments which took outside of state policy and relative to which state policy was a follower rather than a leader. An example of this might be the ways in which later Ming commercial expansion and new wealth are obscured by the narrative of dynastic decline.¹ The same criticism can be directed at the primacy given the dynastic framework in training historians and in analyzing historical change on the grounds that it obscures those large scale changes taking place over long periods to which dynastic foundations responded but which they did not fully control.² The problem with being anachronistic is that it filters the past through a contemporary lens. For example, the study of the states of Xia, Liao, Jin, and Yuan is commonly treated as part of “Chinese history.” The decision to compile dynastic histories in the style of Tang and Song for the Liao and Jin, but not Xia, in the 1340s provides some justification for this, although one could argue that this form did not fit necessarily fit the historical realities of the subject, but even then some opposed doing so. Moreover these states were created by peoples who were seen by those writing in Chinese at the time as having conquered all or part of what those writers thought of as “our” territory and those peoples themselves made a point of their developing writing systems that would be incompatible with Chinese writing. The problem with not being self-critical is that the ideological goals which national history serves, such as the creation of a nation and national people, are not brought to the reader’s attention as an issue of the author’s time and place. Putting the past in service of the

¹ For example, Ray Huang’s marvelous *1587: A Year of No Significance* asks why the dynastic system could (not) work, yet largely ignores the extraordinary social, economic, and cultural changes of the time.

² Writing within dynastic frameworks is still the norm in institutional history, but less so for sociocultural history, as the number of titles beginning with “(late) Ming-(early) Qing” illustrates.

present is not a new phenomenon – think, for example, of Zhu Xi's (1130-1200) unwillingness to accept Sima Guang's (1019-1086) view that there was no "legitimate" succession of dynasties.

All we have to do is agree that there ought to be a place for contesting national history to ask the next question. One possibility is simply to critique the historiographical practice of a certain moment. But if we want to go beyond criticism then there are, I think, two strategies available to us. The first is to adopt a world historical approach. Comparative history is one way of doing this, and recently some historians have tried to show how we can have a comparative history that does not depend on taking a particular national or regional history as the baseline in making comparison.³ A world systems history, which explores the links between developments in different states and regions of the world is another way.⁴ The obvious reality of transnational and global flows today – trade, popular culture, pollution – should remind us that these existed on a more limited scale in the past as well. The second strategy is to pay more attention to "the local" as a category of historical study. This paper is primarily concerned with the question of whether we can suppose the local as a category at all in the Chinese case and, if we can, how we should conceive of it.

Leaving aside the question of what constitutes the local, for the moment, we can note that the historical study of particular places is not an unproblematic category in China today. With some exceptions (Huizhou studies comes to mind) it has low status within the profession; it is left for people low on the academic hierarchy or for local scholars and "amateur historian" entirely outside of that hierarchy – precisely because it is not seen as national. It tends toward boosterism, something that uncritically promotes the given place as special in some way. It tends to be created through the compilation of materials without any historical analysis. And yet local history has a cumulative history of almost 1000 years in China and it is undergoing something of a renaissance today. We usually associate the history of localities with local gazetteers (地方志), but in fact there were many ways of writing about a place and its history. These local histories are almost always defined by the state's administrative hierarchy – typically a province, prefecture, county, or township (鎮). Writing about a place defined by administrative boundaries and hierarchy has many of the problems of writing about a period bounded by a dynasty or reign period: much of what affects the fortune of a locale – weather, war, the economy – are regional phenomena over which the locale has no control. From this perspective local history is useful for its fact-gathering or data-preserving work, but it does not really attain a respectable level of historical analysis. Or, if it does, the results remain limited to the locale, without important consequences for elsewhere.

The case study and regional analysis offer two ways out of the dilemma of local history. The intensive study of a particular place has proven its worth as a means of generating and testing hypotheses about larger phenomena, for in practice the questions that guide a local case study depend on a broader historical perspective.⁵ Regional analysis uses local places as evidence for the existence of a regional system – such as a marketing network – that can be

³ Examples of this include Roy Bin Wong, *China transformed: historical change and the limits of European experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), and Kenneth Pomeranz, *The great divergence: China, Europe, and the making of the modern world economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁴ See, for example, Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: global economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998).

⁵ For the middle period two local case studies are of particular note: Robert P. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen: The Elite of Fu-Chou, Chiang-Hsi, in Northern and Southern Sung*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), and Beverley Bossler, *Powerful Relations: Kinship, Status, and the State in Sung China (960-1279)* (Cambridge: Harvard University, Council on East Asian Studies, 1998).

objectively defined.⁶ Although both the case study and regional analysis require the intensive study of local data, they do not have to presuppose the local as an analytic category. In the first case a locale is an instance; in the second what is local is an element in a system.

This paper asks in what sense the “local” in fact existed. To get at this question I want to ask how “place” was constituted from a geographic and cartographic perspective. Geography as a category of knowledge and a tradition of scholarship has a long history in China; it takes spatial difference as the primary means of organizing information and understanding relationships in the data. Cartography provides a visual means of representing that information – it is a core visual device of the geographer just as chronology is a basic narrative device of the historian.

The case against “the local”

I want to begin by examining the argument against treating the local as a category that has the potential for providing an alternative to a national historical narrative. The case against the local could be stated along the following lines. The essence of this case is that state regimes in China’s past were “top-down” systems. The Qin unification of 221 merely realized in a single centralized bureaucratic system what had been a long standing conceptual framework for the organization of people and land. From this perspective the state – embodied in the ruler and his court – created place, and all places of note were defined by their place in the administrative hierarchy of the day. To speak of “the local” in this case refers only the lowest extension of government: the administrative units which had direct responsibility for extracting resources from the population. In short, this argument goes, in China the local only had a meaningful existence as part of a state system. The “Treatise on Geography” in the official history of the Sui dynasty (581-618) (written in the early seventh century) begins with this the idea that the political center organized territory and human society.

Since antiquity all the sage kings who received the mandate to govern marked out the capital and measured the lands so as to set the axis for humanity. Above they were in correspondence with the orbits of the planets; below they divided [according to] the mountains and rivers. They created borders and they drew boundaries; they established a capital and they bestowed fiefs.⁷

In this view places existed because, like the national capital, they were created by fiat. In doing so they achieved a fit with the physical universe, but the system was instituted from above. This does not necessarily imply that there were no people inhabiting the land; it simply makes them a part of the landscape, a place is not constituted by the fact of habitation. Into the eleventh century national geographies, of which the treatises on geography in the dynastic histories are an example, articulated this view. For example, the Sui History has the following entry pertaining to the area of which Jinhua was a part.

Dongyang Commandery. [In 589 when Sui] subdued Chen it established Wu Prefecture. Overseeing four counties; households: 19,805.

Jinhua [county].

Formerly called Changshan [Long Mountain], [the government] placed Jinhua Commandery [here]. [When Sui] subdued Chen the commandery was abolished. In addition [Sui] abolished the three counties of Jiande, Taimo, and Feng’an and put them into [Jinhua] and [its name] was changed to Wuning County. In the twelfth year (592) [its

⁶ This is most often associated with the G. William Skinner, some of whose work is noted below.

⁷ Sui shu 隋書 (Scripta Sinica ed.), 29.806.

name] was changed to Dongyang. In the eighteenth year (598) its name was changed to [Jinhua]. At the beginning of the Daye period (605) it placed the Dongyang Commandery [here]. There are a Long Mountain, Lou Mountain, and a Qiu Mountain.

Yongkang.

Wushang. There are a Xiang Mountain and a Ge Mountain.

Xin'an. There are a Jiang Mountain and a Beisi Mountain. There is a Dingyang River.⁸

From the perspective of this text, the empire consists of places in the administrative hierarchy and features of the physical landscape – mountains and rivers – are noted within this administrative system, even though features such as rivers crossed administrative lines. Fig. 1 maps the passage above (I will later return to the absence of boundaries in the text).

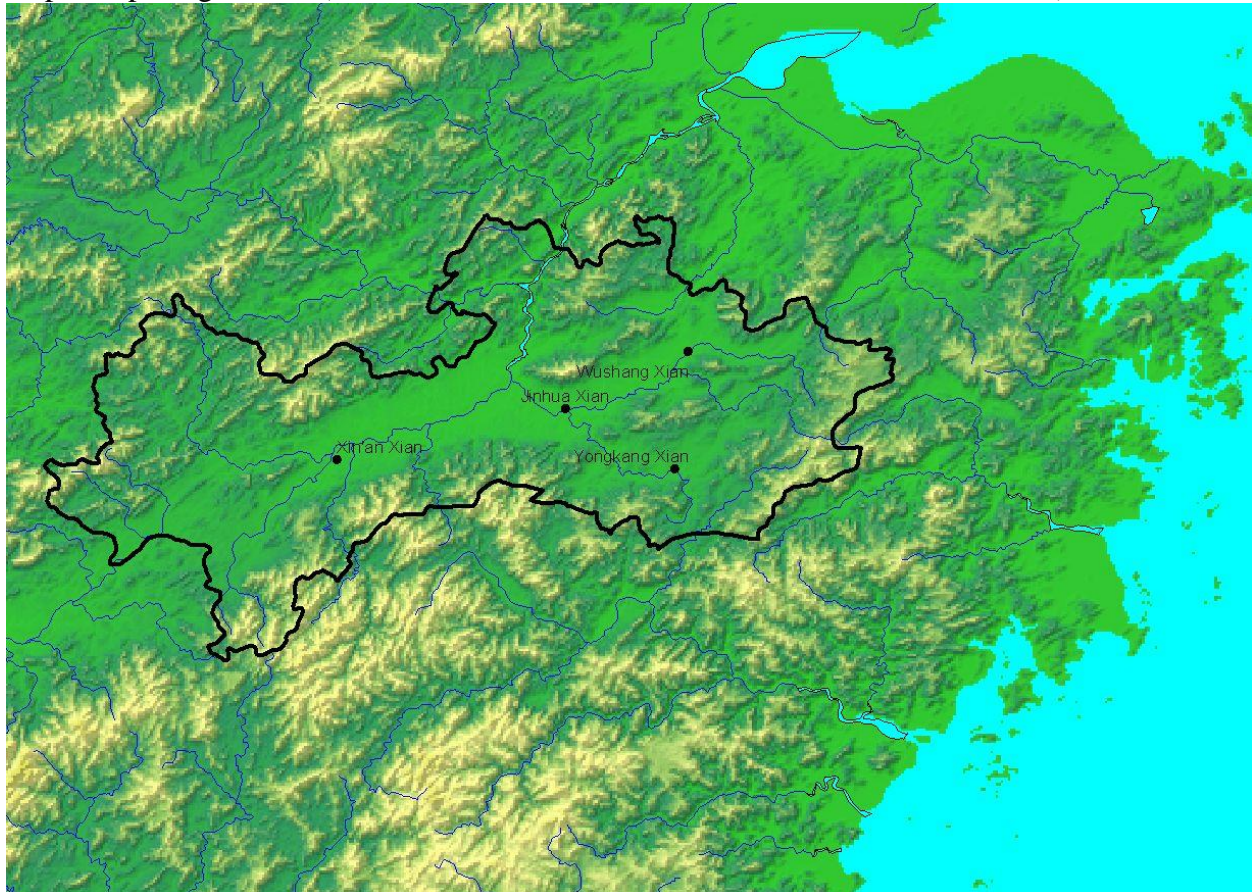


Fig. 1, Dongyang jun in 606, showing the four named counties in the Sui history overlaid on a contemporary digital elevation model showing mountains and rivers. Source: CHGIS v. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard Yenching Institute: 2003)

Over the long term the imperial state's integration of population and territory extended from north to south. This does not deny that there were "aboriginal" populations and cultures in the south going back to the Neolithic, it simply recognizes that they were colonized by a combination of migrants and administrators from the north, so that the existence of localities in a meaningful historical sense was the result of a state framework being imposed from above.⁹

⁸ *Sui shu* 31.878.

⁹ See, for example, Harold Wiens, *China's March Toward the Tropics* (Hamden, CT: Shoestring Press, 1954). Also note Yue Zumou, "Development of Regional Systems in Pre- and Early Imperial China," (Ph. D. dissertation,

We find the same approach to defining localities in two of the extant geographical texts from the Tang-Song transition period. Li Jifu's Charts and Treatises on Commanderies and Counties in the Yuanhe Reign Period (its accompany maps are lost) dates from 806-814, and is more fulsome. For each prefecture it gives the name, rank, population, and the total number of *xiang* 鄉 (translated as "cantons," a territorial designation in the Song period, in contrast to the Tang *xiang* which was to be established for every Tang 500 registered households), its administrative history, the extent of the prefecture measured east to west and north to south, the goods it was responsible for supplying to the court, and the distance by road (and in some cases river) to the national capitals and surrounding prefectural seats. For each county it gave its rank, origin of its name, the direction and distance to the prefectural seat. In some cases it gives a river and whence it flows and a mountain, and in some cases it notes an event that makes a place significant (e.g. Jinhua Mountain, named as Long Mountain [Changshan] in the Sui treatise above, is glossed as "Where Master Red Pine apprehended the Way").¹⁰ Wang Cun's Treatise on the Nine Regions in the Yuanfeng Reign Period from 1078-85 is similar but more summary. It does reflect a change, however. Now the number of cantons are noted under each county and they are no longer units based on 500 households. In addition it formally recognizes certain market towns (*zhen* 鎮), in addition to administrative seats.¹¹

These geographies articulate the perspective of a centralized bureaucracy. They are concerned with the places where the government is instantiated, rather than with network of settlements of the inhabitants. Taking the Wuzhou/Jinhua case we can be sure that many settlements existed here – given that the registered population grew from Sui's 19,805 households for a much larger area to 129,751 for a smaller area (approximate to Jinhua municipality today) in the Yuanfeng period. In giving the total number of households for the prefecture one might speculate that the texts are identifying the workload, the size of the body of providers of goods and services that the administrative unit must administer. We could argue that this is because as national geographies these works saw no point in going beyond that level of the administrative hierarchy that was staffed by centrally appointed officials. This is not entirely true: the Yuanfeng text includes named *zhen*, some of which had commercial tax stations with centrally appointed officials.¹² Moreover, although it lists the number of *xiang* per county without naming them, the Song *xiang* (cantons) were used to name areas within the county and although they were still essential to organizing the population for tax purposes, they were no longer directly connected to population numbers.¹³ My point is that this kind of geography works precisely because it is based on the assumption that the local is an extension of the national. When the local is defined by administrative hierarchy, the distribution of population and physical geography are an afterthought.

The case against treating local places as something different from the national goes beyond this. The administrative chain of command extended from the county seat down to the

Stanford University, 1994), who argues that the urban hierarchy and macroregions were not created by marketing systems but by political processes.

¹⁰ Taking the section on Wuzhou as an example. See Li Jifu 李吉甫, Yuanhe jun xian tu zhi 元和郡縣圖志 (Wuying dian ju zhen ban ed.) 27.4b-7a.

¹¹ Wang Cun 王存, Yuanfeng jiuyu zhi 元豐九域志 (1784 ed.), 5.16a-b. The term *zhen* referred originally to "garrisons" but by this time it is also used for commercial centers.

¹² In the Wuzhou case the one named town, Xiaoshun zhen 孝順鎮 in Jinhua county, did have a commercial tax station in 1077. See the Song huiyao (Harvard On-line edition)

¹³ Wang Cun, Yuanfeng jiuyu zhi, 5.16a-b, gives a total of 66 *xiang* versus 200 for the early eighth century.

tax payers. In Song times the county was administered by a maximum of four officials (the magistrate, sometimes a vice-magistrate, a registrar, and a sheriff). But the tax system required keeping registers both for households and for land holdings, a particularly difficult matter since by Song times land was freely traded on the private market. This sub-county administration was managed by local personnel, either hired for the purpose or required to provide some service on a rotating basis, through various state-mandated organizations that grouped households together in nested hierarchies.¹⁴ In Ming times multiple systems linked individual households to the state administration, making it highly unlikely that any inhabitant was unconnected to the state apparatus.¹⁵

This is apparent in accounts of how cadastral surveys were supposed to be conducted in the eleventh and twelfth century. In essence, the superior guard (the *dubao* 都保 of 250 households) would measure out local land parcels and assess their productivity for tax purposes. They would also prepare maps showing these parcels, roads, waterways, and residences. Then the owners would have to declare what they owned and officials would check their declaration against the map.¹⁶ A similar “bottom up” procedure of mapping territory was proposed by Yuan Xie 袁燮 (1144-1224) who, when charged with managing famine relief in the late twelfth century, decided to

“order each guard (the *bao* 保) to draw a map with paddy and fields, mountains and rivers, and roads. The inhabitants spread among them were to write on it their names and numbers and their livelihood. The [maps of the] guards were to be combined to make the [map] for the superior guard (*du*), the [maps of the] superior guards were to be combined to make the canton, and the canton [maps] were to be combined to make the county [map]. In taxation, legal disputes, and arresting bandits, things would be decided simply by turning to the map. He thought that this was a priority in relief administration.”¹⁷

Yuan’s idea suggests both that the earlier cadastral survey maps had not been kept up and that what the administrative tracked in the first place was taxpayers rather than land.

We know that the central government possessed far more information than extant national geographies included. In the Sui, Tang, and Northern Song prefectures and counties submitted “map guides” (圖經) to the central government. The earliest extant text that looks like a map guide dates from early eighth century Sha prefecture, including Dunhuang county. It is only partially extant – the maps and three of five scrolls are lost – but includes both prefectural and county information in detail. It was produced during a period when the government still claimed ownership of productive land and redistributed it on a regular basis (the Tang “equal fields system” 均田法). It provides details on natural features (e.g. waterways, reservoirs, and mountains), government buildings (e.g., postal stations and schools), official religious sites (e.g., official altars, shrines to gods with local weather functions, and commemorative shrines),

¹⁴ Detailed in Brian E. McKnight, *Village and Bureaucracy in Southern Sung China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

¹⁵ These are discussed in Timothy Brook, “The Spatial Structure of Ming Local Administration”, *Late Imperial China* 6.1 (1985): 1-55. Brooks thesis is examined in a later section of this paper.

¹⁶ Two systems were employed. Here I have described the “Boundary Policy” *Jingjie fa* 經界法 of 1142. A somewhat similar procedure was used during the Northern Song, the most important of which was the “Squaring the Fields and Equalizing Taxes Policy” 方田均稅法 under the New Policies. Cadastral maps from this period are not known to exist. For a Qing example see Yee, *Cartography in China*, p. 84.

¹⁷ *Song shi*, 400.12146. Noted in Needham, vol. 3, p. 518.

monuments (e.g., graves, halls, and walls), population, roads, local products, customs, and Buddhist monasteries. It includes sections for “loyal ministers and filial sons” and “chaste wives and exemplary daughters,” left empty, and poems and odes collected locally in response to imperial rule.¹⁸ Map guides such as this were administrative documents. In early Northern Song the central government compiled them into a work of 1566 scrolls and ordered their regular submission.¹⁹

From this perspective we should envision the county, the lowest unit in the administrative hierarchy, as the administration of a hierarchy of groups that organized nearly the entire population. Residents, even though they lived in villages, belonged to organizations that were defined numerically rather than by settlement, and thus they would know the chain of command to which they belonged. Thus cartographers did not typically conceive of the county as a clearly defined bounded territorial entity with dispersed settlements.²⁰ Rather they were inclined to depict the county seat and the surrounding administrative units. This is particularly apparent in Fig. 2.

¹⁸ Shazhou tujing 沙洲圖經 (Xuxiu Siku quanshu ed.). Discussed in Ikeda On 池田 溫, “Sashū tokei kō” 沙州圖經略考, Enoki hakase kanreki kinen Toyoshi ronso 榎博士還暦記念東洋史論叢 (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1975, 1975): 33-101.

¹⁹ This was the no longer extant Xiangfu zhouxian tujing 祥符州縣圖經, discussed in James M. Hargett, “Song Dynasty Local Gazetteers and their Place in the History of *Difangzhi* Writing”, Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 56.2 (1996): 405-4 (412-3) and Aoyama Sadao 青山定雄, Tō Sō jidai no kōtsu to chihōshizu no kenkyū 唐宋時代の交通と地方志圖の研究, (Tokyo: 1963), 466-7.

²⁰ In the late sixteenth century there are instances of the use of grid maps at the county level but these did not become the norm. See Timothy Brook, “Mapping Knowledge in the Sixteenth Century: The Gazetteer Cartography of Ye Chunji”, The [Princeton University, Gest] East Asian Library Journal 7.2 (1994): 5-32.

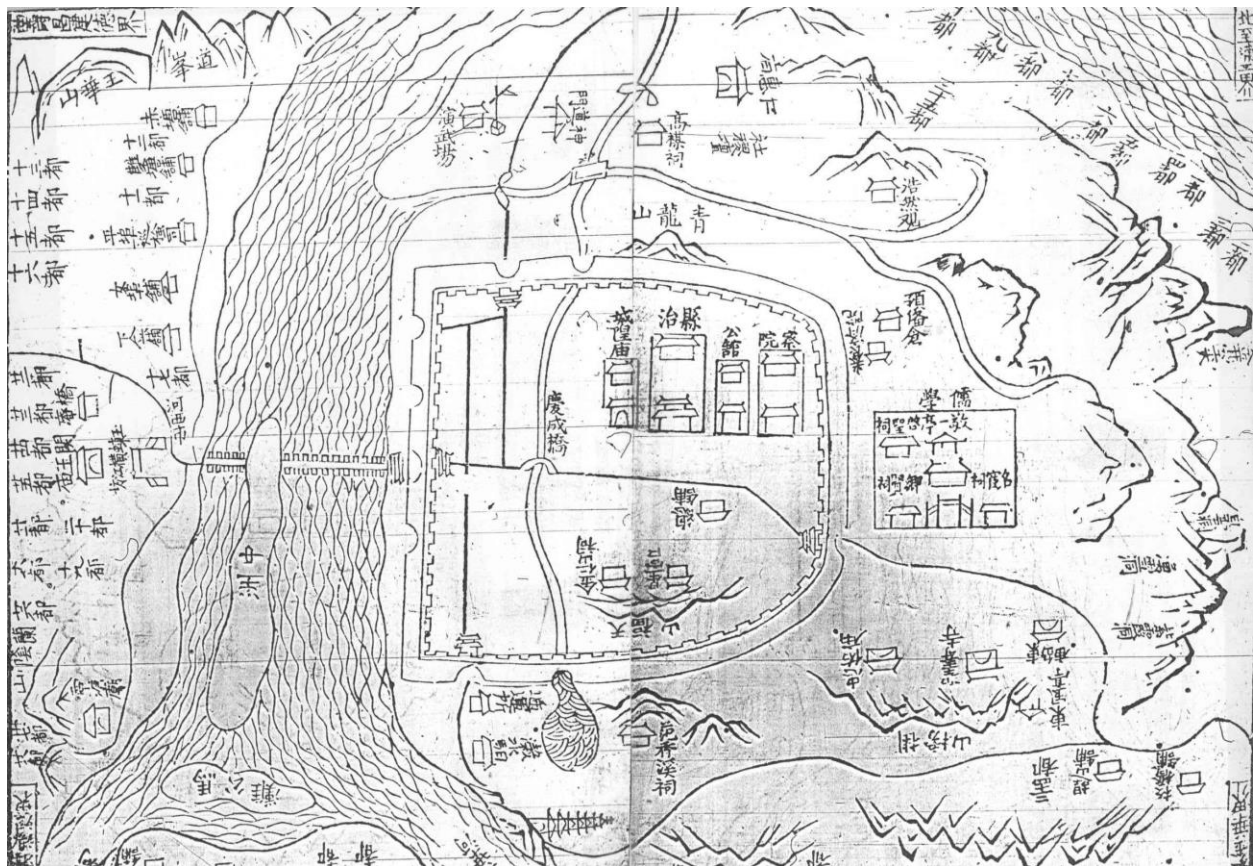


Fig. 2. Map of Lanxi 蘭溪 county, Jinhua fu. The county seat occupies the middle of the map, thirty five *du* are arrayed along the outside edges. Source: *Lanxi xianzhi* (1510 ed.)

Cognitively places trumped spaces. That is, although a county certainly existed within a landscape and had jurisdiction over people who occupied space, it was the county seat and its subunits that defined the county, rather than the territory.

Under this circumstance, it has been argued, the villager would have seen the “county” as the county seat to which he was linked, not as the place where he lived.²¹ We can also imagine that from the central government’s perspective it was easy to abolish and establish counties and prefectures, for it was simply a matter of assigning officials to a location, building a government office, and imposing organization on the population. This happened repeatedly in Wuzhou before the Song. Geographers dealt with the instability of local administrative units by tracing their place in changing administrative hierarchies, it was difficult it was to visualize administrative history in spatial terms.

This top down view of localities as administrative places had three other consequences. One was that the spatial relationships between administrative units was defined in terms of distances between administrative seats. National geographies in the Tang and Song locate prefectures by giving the direction of and travel distances to surrounding prefectural seats, as in Fig.3.

²¹ For a discussion of this based on a late Qing case see Henrietta Harrison, “Village Identity in Rural North China: a Sense of Place in the Diary of Liu Dapeng,” *Town and Country in China: Identity and Perception*, ed. David Faure, and Tao Tao Liu, (Houndsmills: Palgrave, 2002): 85-106.

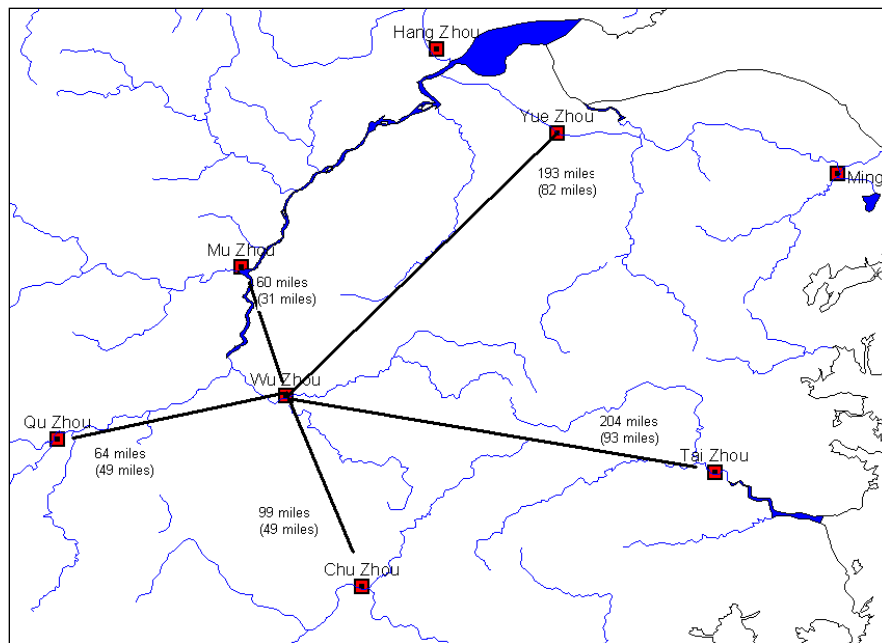


Fig. 3. Distances between Wu zhou 婺州 (=Dongyang jun, Jinhua fu) and surrounding prefectures (zhou) ca. AD 1000, following the Taiping huanyu ji. Distances are according to the text (and measured in a straight line). In this and the map below the correct locations for all places are identified. The original text gives both direction according to the eight points of the compass and the distance in *li* 里 (“Southeast to Tai zhou 612 *li*”). Background map: CHGIS

However, counties are located in terms of distance between the county seats and the prefectural seat, not with distances to adjacent administrative units, as in Fig. 4.



Fig. 4. Wu zhou and its subordinate counties following the Taiping huanyu ji from ca. 1000. Distances are given according to the text and (in a straight line). The distance to Wuyi xian is from the Yuanfeng jiuyu zhi. Background map source: CHGIS

Second, when Northern Song historical geographies depicted change over time they did so by showing the higher order administrative units in the past to which contemporary prefectures belonged. Ouyang Min's Extended Record of the Realm 輿地廣記 from the 1120s, for example, gives a series of slice-in-time listings of past regimes or circuits with the contemporary prefectures as subordinate units they belonged to past and then gives the administrative history of contemporary prefectures and counties.²² The earliest extant printed historical atlas in human history, Shui Anli's *Simple Charts of Geography Through the Ages* (稅安禮: 歷代地理抵掌圖) finished at the end of the eleventh century, adopts a similar procedure in its maps, of which Fig. 5 is an example.²³

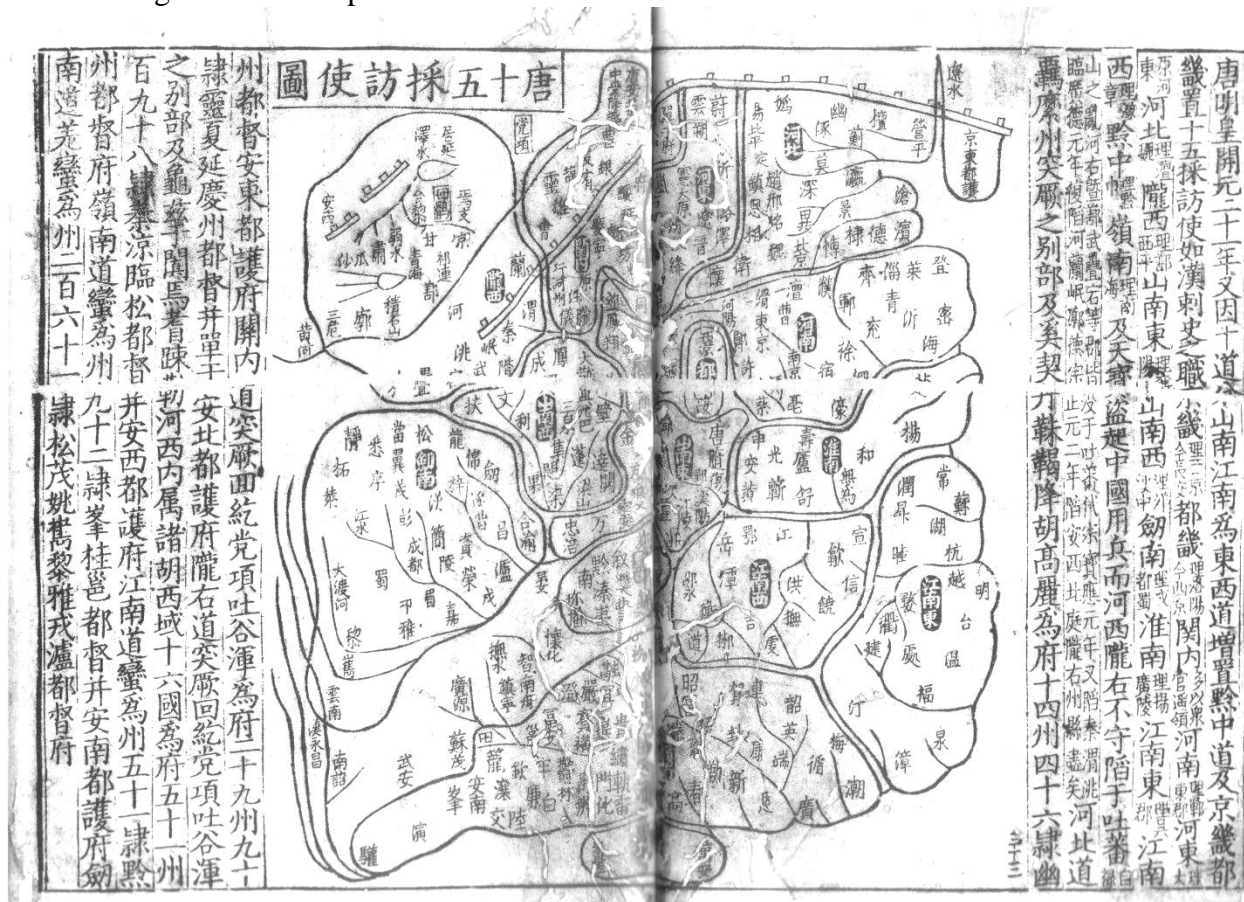


Fig. 5. Shui Anli's depiction of the 15 circuits of the Visiting Intendants established in 734. Source: Shui Anli, *Lidai dili shizhang tu*, p. 66-67.

Third, there was a lack of interest in sharply delineating surrounding borders. This was not because of a lack of the necessary surveying techniques. At least one scholar in the 1080s noted that that by using known surveying techniques and 24 rather than eight compass headings it

²² Ouyang Min 歐陽忞, *Yudi guangji* 輿地廣記, (Wuying dian ju shenban congshu ed.).

²³ Shui Anli 稅安禮, *Lidai dili shizhang tu* 歷代地理抵掌圖 (rpt. of 12th c. ed. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, between 1989). The original is held by the Toyo Bunko in Tokyo. Discussed in Tan Qixiang's preface. Also see Cao Wanru et al 曹婉如 ed. *Zhongguo gudai ditu ji* 中國古代地圖集. Vol.1 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1990), notes for maps 94-101.

would be possible to measure the “as the bird flies” distance between points (the value of this, he claimed, was that with directions and absolute distances a map could be accurately reconstructed when lost).²⁴

This last point may need elaboration. Mathematical cartography did not become the mainline of cartography in China, although general principles of accurate scale were understood (see Fig. 10 below). Rather than seeing this as a failure to develop science, it stemmed from the fact that political cartography was concerned with spatial relations between administrative seats rather than bounded space and that the combination of a chart with text provided information on such crucial matters as travel distances more accurately than a map alone might do.²⁵ The possibility of defining bounded territory was recognized. We see this at the national level in the eleventh century, where it was debated whether marking the state’s northern borders as “zones” rather than “lines” would reduce conflict as control over settlements on the northern border was often in flux.²⁶ Maps from the time that depict the various regimes and peoples did not draw borders, as Fig. 6, shows, because territory was subordinate to administrative places, which are shown.²⁷

²⁴ This was the great polymath Shen Gua 沈括 (1031-1095) in his *Mengxi bitan*; quoted in Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, vol. 3, p. 576.

²⁵ Yee has addressed this and Needham’s concern with the Chinese failure to develop mathematical cartography; see Yee, Cordell D. K. “A Cartography of Introspection: Chinese Maps as Other Than European”, *Asian Art* 5.4 (1992): 29-47, and Cordell D. K. Yee, “Cartography in China,” in *Cartography in Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies*, ed. J. B. Harley, and David Woodward; vol. 2.2 of J. B. Harley and David Woodward, ed. *The History of Cartography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994): 35-202, 228-231.

²⁶ Christian Lamouroux, “Geography and Politics: The Song-Liao Border Dispute of 1074/75” *China and Her Neighbours: Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy, 10th to 19th Century*, ed. Sabine Dabribghaus, and Roderich Ptak, (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997): 1-28.

²⁷ Both Shui Anli and Ouyang Min deal with administrative places Song claimed but did not control by noting them as “prefectures outside of [our dynasty’s] transformative effect” 化外州. . See Shui, *Lidai dili zhizhang tu*, p. 94-95.

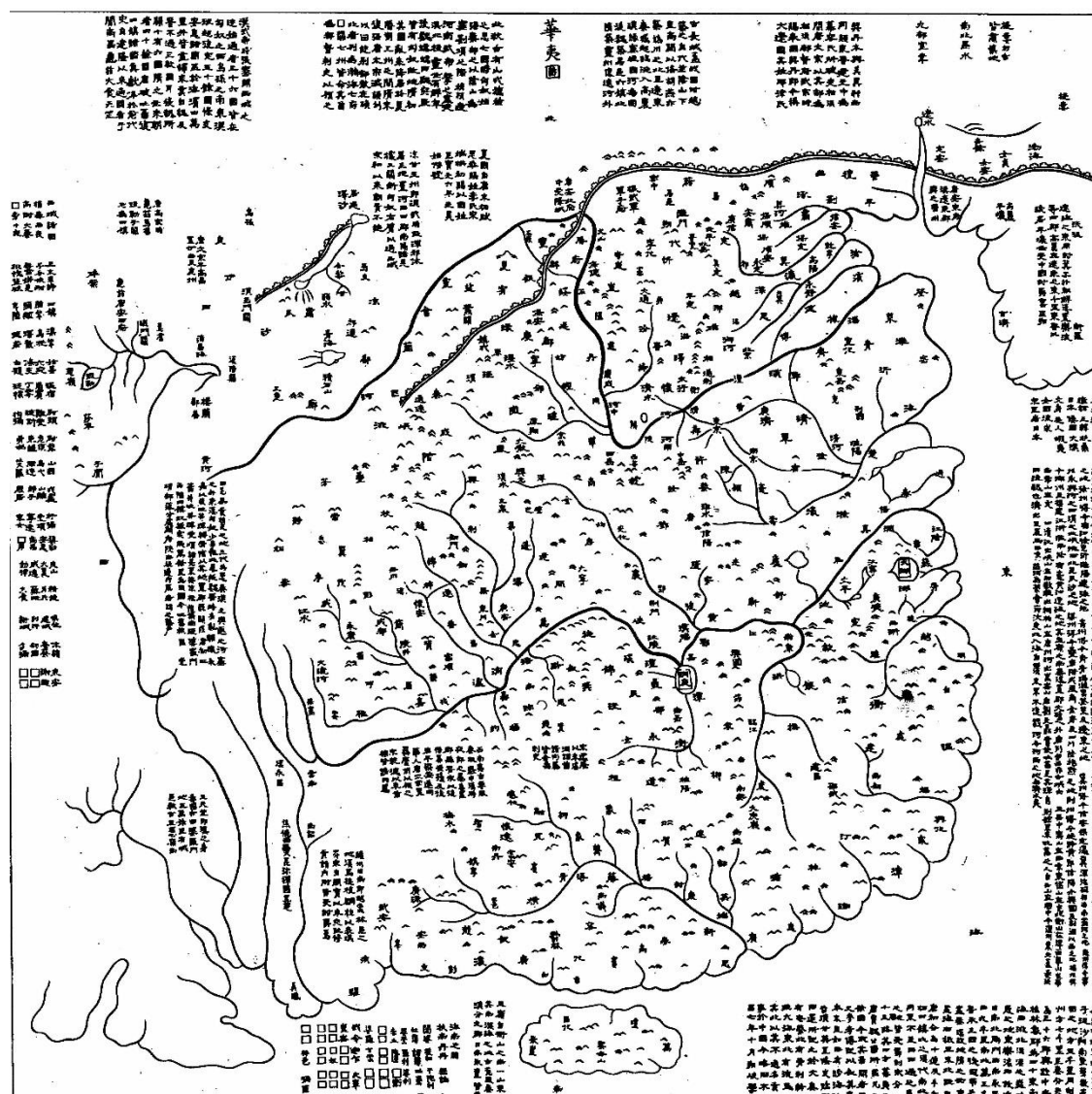


Fig. 6. "Chart of the Hua and the Yi Peoples" 華夷圖 The chart notes Song prefectural seats by name, rivers, lakes, mountains, and the Great Wall. Surrounding texts give historical accounts of the various peoples. From an 1136 engraving but describing the situation as of 1117. Reproduced from Cao Wanru, *Zhongguo gudai ditu ji*, vol 1, pl. 62, which also transcribes the legends on the map.

At the margins of a county this must have been true as well. When there was a private market in land and land followed population then, although at any given moment it would have been possible to say – at least in the case of agricultural land – which county a given parcel paid tax to, such determination depended on a combination of ownership and proximity of residence (historically owners of parcels who resided in a different taxpaying units were difficult to tax). The maps that were supposed to be created from the neighborhood association on up during the cadastral surveys in Southern Song would have provided such a snapshot, but given turnovers in ownership a bottom-up approach must have been difficult to maintain. Thus while it is clear that people understood the concept of surveyed borders it was unnecessary to mark them with any precision. This is evident in county maps which typically fill the entire square space of the page

and notes adjoining administrative units by cartouches at the four corners of the page, visible in Fig. 2 above.

The administrative nature of much cartography has been noted by others.²⁸ Nevertheless one place where there would have been a need to specify an exact border in space would have been along roads between administrative units, and indeed we find maps such as Fig. 7 which, without showing any transport routes whatsoever, use a cartouche to mark border points between counties on the prefectural map.²⁹

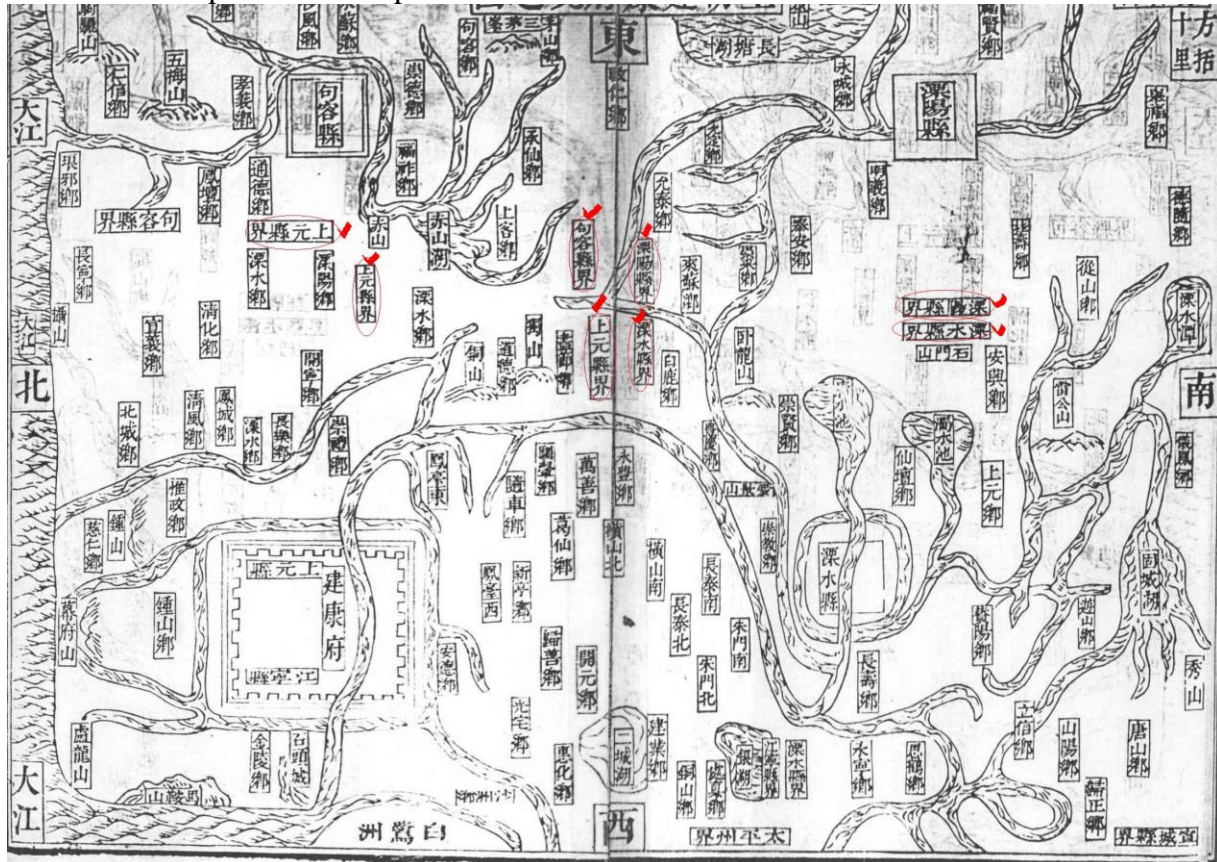


Fig. 7. General map of Jiankang Prefecture in 1261. Large walled square (lower left) is the prefectural seat. County seats are smaller squares. Cartouches noting county borders are marked in red. This is a later tracing of the map, preserving the note (upper right) specifying the scale but not showing the grid. Source: *Jingding*

However, the idea that an administrative unit should be depicted as bounded territory, as it is today in China, would seem to be a recent development. In fact in Jinhua it only appears in the late nineteenth century with the introduction of Western cartography. Fig. 8 is an example of this technique and illustrates one consequence of it: the depiction of the county as isolated in space.

²⁸ See, for example, Hu Bangbo "Maps and Political Power: A Cultural Interpretation of the Maps in *The Gazetteer of Jiankang Prefecture*", *Journal of the North American Cartographic Information Society*.34 (1999): 9-22, and Hu Bangbo "Cartography in a Chinese Gazetteer of 1268, *The Gazetteer of Linan Prefecture*", *Middle States Geographer*.32 (1999): 61-70.

²⁹ The cartography of this gazetteer is discussed in Hu Bangbo 胡邦波, "Jingding Jiankangzhi zhong de ditu jianjiu" 景定《建康志》中的地圖研究, *Zhongguo gudai dituji* 中國古代地圖集, (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1990): 69-80.

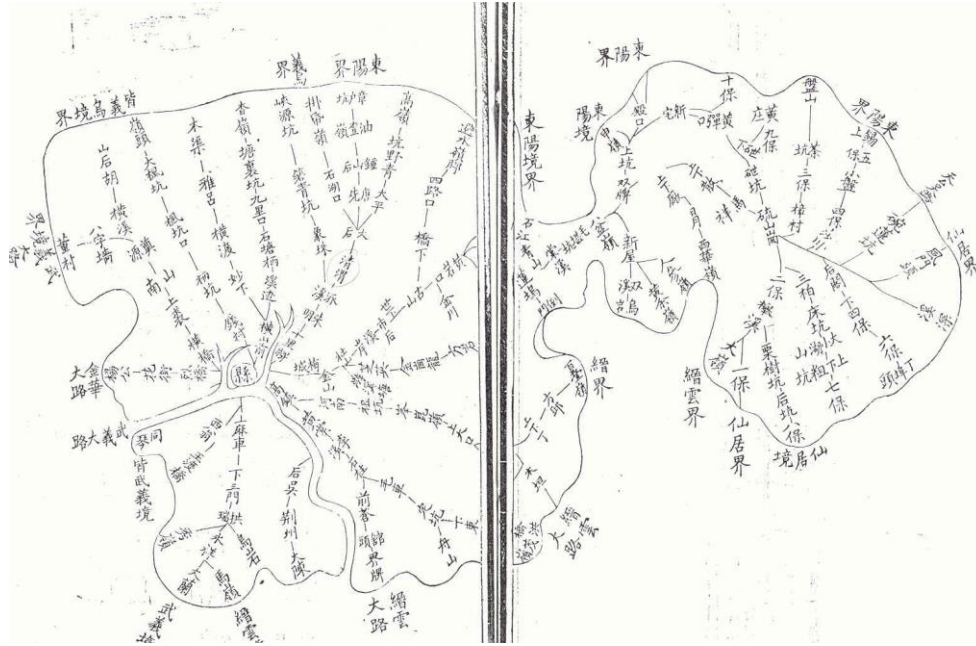


Fig. 8.
Yongkang 永康 county as depicted in the gazetteer of 1892, showing the influence of Western cartography. Borders with adjacent units are noted at the edges.
Source: Yongkang xianzhi (1892 ed.)

Having said this, however, it should be noted that there are a few sixteenth century examples, such as Fig. 9, in which the administrative unit is depicted as bounded territory using a grid map technique (grid maps for county maps were employed in the thirteenth century but did not draw borders).³⁰

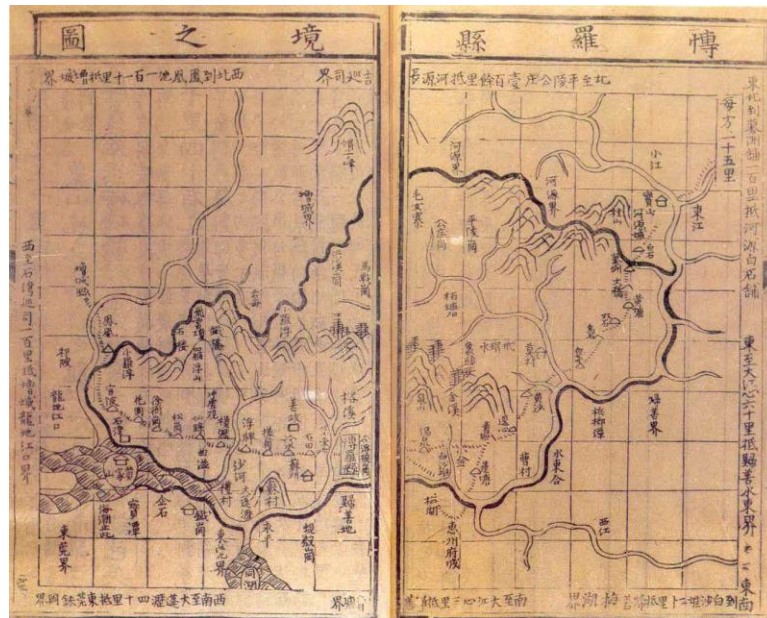


Fig. 9. Boluo County 博羅縣.
Source: Huizhou 惠州 fuzhi (1596 ed.)

Administrative units conceived of as bounded space rather than administrative hierarchies might point toward a sense of place as space, and thus a conception of the local as something different. However, the administrative hierarchy was not the only order according which the local was constituted.

The bureaucratic apparatus claimed the authority to organize the population through its administrative hierarchy and administrative geography and cartography adopted that perspective

³⁰ In addition note Brook, "Mapping Knowledge," which deals with Ye Chunji's maps while serving in Fujian.

when depicting the local in books and maps. Clearly this was a perspective that others could and did share, particularly those who themselves sought to become officials and, since they may have acted with reference to cognitive space as well as physical space, this perspective had real consequences even if it did not fit with geographic reality.

However strong the argument for the local as an extension of the national, it can be challenged. One challenge – taken up at a later point in this paper – has come from those who argue that with the extension of the market economy, there emerged an alternative and more fundamental hierarchy of settlements based on marketing networks. The challenge I offer below is somewhat different. Rather than denying the validity of the administrative hierarchy, I argue that it was one of several overlapping spatial networks recognized by geography, cartography, and history and that during the course of the Tang-Song transition historiographical efforts to constitute the local availed themselves of all these spatial possibilities. The first of these, physical geography, has as long a history as administrative geography.

Physical geography and administrative hierarchy

From a physical perspective the political realm was a civilizing project set atop a physical landscape of mountains and rivers inhabited by humans who were originally hardly distinguishable from the birds and beasts. The dynastic history of the Jin dynasty (265-420) begins its “Treatise on Geography” with the creation of the world and the advent of civilized life. In this text the physical universe is the primary context and the empire’s extent is marked by pre-existing physical places.

In the past the primordial embryo had no image, the plain element flowed into form, and by responding to what was in heaven some became leaders. Of this [time] the [Book of] Rites said: “In the winter they lived in mounds and caves, in the summer they lived on twig platforms and nests. They drank blood and ate [the meat of things with] feathers/fur; they had yet neither hemp nor silk.”³¹ Then Fireman invented firemaking. Baoxi began the project [of government], he transformed his clan and continued the legacy. Yan continued the glorious project and marked out territory [for farming] in the unknown. They all were part of a single plan. The Yellow Emperor then went east to the sea and south to the great river; he climbed into emptiness and ascended Mount Tai. Reaching the Kun range [in the west] he pulled on the reins, at the Kong mountains he asked about the Way. He preserved it all on bamboo slips so that nothing would be mistaken. Gaoyang relied on the spirits particular to the place. Diku accorded with heaven and performed the ceremonies. East past Crooked Tree [Mountain], west across the Flowing Sands, north to Dark Mounds, and south to the Crossing,³² in all that the sun and moon passed through, everywhere that cart and boat could reach, none were not subjects of the King and they did not depart from this realm.³³

The idea that the government was imposing its order on a more natural order tied to the physical world is evident in Ban Gu’s discussion of social mores (*feng-su*) in his “Treatise on Geography” in the History of Han.

³¹ Citing the Li yun chapter.

³² Citing the Da Dai li ji, “Virtue of the five emperors.”

³³ Jin shu 晉書 (Scripta Sinica ed.), 14.405

The people have a nature with the five constants but [regionally] they differ in temperament and their sounds are not the same. This depends on the wind and *qi* of the water and soil [where they live], thus it is called “wind” (*feng*). Their values and behavior are not constant, they follow the desires of the ruler above, thus it is called habits (*su*). Confucius said, “For shifting winds and changing the habits, nothing is better than music. He meant that when a sage kind is on top the orchestrates human relation and necessarily shifts the root and changes the branch. The kingly instruction is realized when we make all under heaven the same and unify them with centrality and harmony.”³⁴

Differences among the population are tied to the qualities of the land itself; it is the job of government to transform the diverse peoples of the landscape into a single whole. This interplay of the administrative and the physical is already present in the foundational geography, the “Tribute of Yu” in the Book of Documents, which asserts the ability of human effort to reconfigure and exploit the landscape: river courses are changed, the plains leveled, the marshes drained, the tribute of local products registered, the quality of the fields assessed, the appropriate crops determined, and the natives described.³⁵

In early China what we might call the discourse of landscape was not always so confident of the powers of the state to hold dominion. Its capital was the seat of the court (*chao* 朝), the center of power and wealth, and a planned city, but against it stood the rough and uncultivated wilds (*yeh* 野). The “son of heaven” in the center in his capital held sway over the plains but mysterious forces and deities inhabited the surrounding mountains.³⁶ With altars and sacrifices, the representatives of administrative geography, from the emperor on down to the local officials, had to negotiate with and propitiate the forces that energized the physical landscape.

Literary responses to mountains and rivers as the notable features of a landscape have a long history in China.³⁷ Many works that are principally concerned with describing or responding to the physical landscape locate themselves with place names that have regional rather than administratively specific meaning.³⁸ And in the Song the landscape became the creative center of painting as well. But for our purposes it is more important to note that it was possible assert that physical geography, not government, was the true constant, as does Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1104-62) in introducing his overview of geography in his Comprehensive Treatise:

The establishment of prefectures (*zhou*) and counties changes from time to time; the form of mountains and rivers has not changed for a thousand years. That is why when the “Tribute of Yu” divided [the land] into regions (*zhou*) it had to use mountains and rivers to set the borders. Thus if [the prefectural place named] Yan *zhou* might move the Yan [region defined] with the Ji River could not move, and if Liang *zhou* might shift the Liang of the Huayang and Hei Water could not shift. This is why the “Tribute of Yu”

³⁴ Ban Gu, Han shu (Scripta Sinica ed.) p. 1640

³⁵ For a translation of this text see Bernard Karlgren, “The Book of Documents,” Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities 22 (1950): 12-18.

³⁶ My thinking about this owes much to Sarah Jo-Shao Wang, “Out of control: The place of shanshui (mountains and rivers) in the geographical discourse of early imperial China,” Ph.D. diss. University of Michigan, 1999.

³⁷ Zhang Guogan 張國淦, Zhongguo gu fangzhi kao 中國古方志考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962) provides an index to about 2000 local geographical records through the Yuan dynasty, 99% of which are lost, of these a large proportion are literary works concerned with the landscape.

³⁸ For example, Liu Kui 劉夔, Wuyi shan ji 武夷山記; Lu Guangwei 陸廣微 Wu di ji 吳地記; Luo Han 羅含, Xiangzhong shanshui ji 湘中山水記; and Pan Zishao 潘子韶, Xiajiang lishe ji 峽江利涉集; these titles are taken from the “Treatise on Bibliography,” Song Shi p. 5156

became a work that would not change even in a myriad generations. Later historians were principally concerned with prefectures and counties, but once prefectures and counties changed their works were abandoned. This geography takes water as the main thing, for the waters are the veins of the earth. The arrangements of commanderies and counties, the divisions of prefectures and circuits, all are distinguished through the waters. The waters of the central states are the Jiang [Yangzi], He [=Yellow River], Ji, and Huai. These are the four main rivers into which all other waters drain. If one can understand this then you will have a grasp of all under heaven.³⁹

Zheng Qiao's interest in physical geography as the basis for understanding the spatial configuration of the administrative system ignored what he certainly knew: that rivers, particularly the Yellow River, had changed course over time. Nevertheless the interest in physical geography was shared by others. One result was the greatest, and most accurate, grid map known from the Song dynasty, "Chart of the Traces of Yu." As Fig. 10 illustrates, this map, engraved in stone to facilitate printing, focused on the river system.

³⁹ Zheng Qiao 鄭樵, *Tong zhi* 通志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 1987) 40.541A.

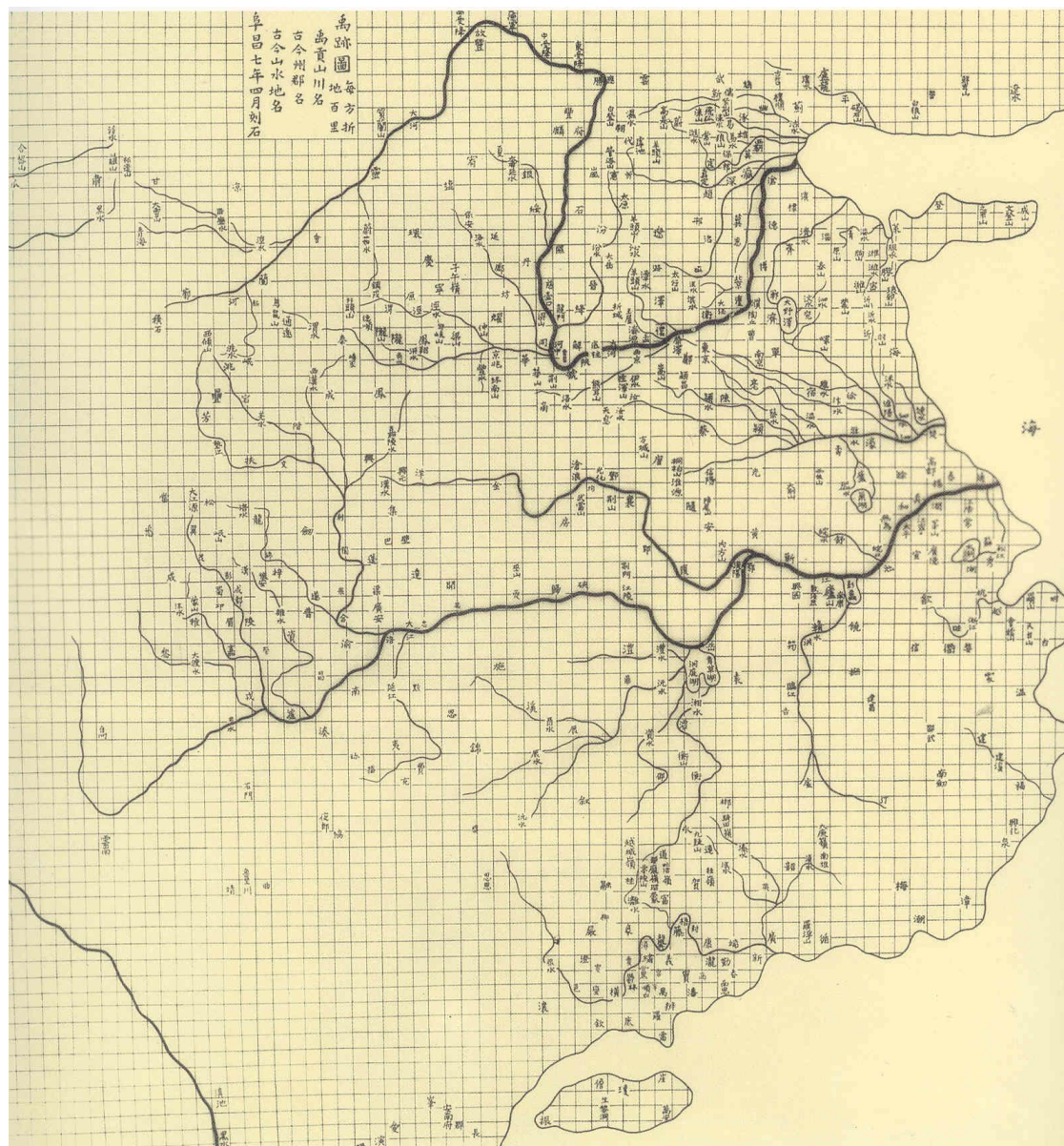


Fig. 10. “Chart of the Traces of Yu” 禹迹圖 ; from an engraving in 1136 but with the Yellow River course as of 1080. The legend states that it is scaled at 100 *li* (ca. 30 miles) to the square. It names rivers and mountains found in the “Tributes of Yu” chapter in the Classics, as well as past and present names of administrative units (to the prefectural level) and of rivers and mountains. Source: Cao Wanru, *Zhongguo gudai ditu ji*, vol. 1, plate 56

The basic claim that Zheng Qiao makes, that administrative structures are less permanent than the major features of the landscape, has bearing on conceptions of the local by offering an alternative to the claim that the local is only to be seen as an extension of the administrative system. Administrative geographies locate mountains and rivers within administrative units. Zheng Qiao, and the map in Fig. 10, locate the administrative in the context of the physical. To focus on the landscape is to see a spatial system that exists independently of administrative place.

The landscape has its own history, its own meanings, and its own permanency. It provides the grounds on which human history unfolds. This explains, I think, why those national maps which are concerned with physical space tend to be more accurate than those – such as the depiction of Hua and Yi peoples in Fig. 6 or in Shui Anli's historical atlas as in Fig. 5 – which are primarily concerned with the history of political regimes.

The venue in which physical space and administrative place are most fully conjoined at a national level is in strategic geography. Ni Pu, a twelfth century scholar from Jinhua with an interest in statecraft, explained to a possible patron why he was interested in geography:

“[Having considered these historical events] I then knew that the learning of geography is something of urgent concern to the military strategist and that it is something that scholarly officials ought to know. When Emperor Gaozu of Han was invading Qin, Xiao He obtained Qin maps and records; when our dynasty was subduing Southern Tang, it first obtained the map guides (圖經) of its nineteen prefectures. Thus when Gaozu took the empire and when Emperor Taizong attacked south of the Yangzi (Jiangnan), they both were able to fully know the locations of strategic points and populations. On the basis of the strategic configuration they took those lands that would have to be fought over and thus they were victorious and lost nothing. And then I also knew that territorial maps and accounts of places were truly essential documents of the state.

I find it strange that scholars today do not know the four directions, that they are not cognizant of distance and strategic location. At a time when arms are employed and there are many problems, they point to a map and refer to historical records and, speaking of the strategic configuration of the world in the abstract, say that they can analyze the reasons for victory and defeat and know how the disposition of forces in attack and defense should be deployed. How can they fool me!”⁴⁰

Although Ni's geography and map are lost, a similar map has survived. Soon after he was appointed an instructor to the heir apparent in 1189 Huang Shang 黃裳 presented him with eight charts for his general education. He began with charts of natural philosophy and the natural foundations for human society (the Supreme Ultimate and the Original Nature of the Heaven, Earth, and Man); he followed this with charts outlining the diverse ways of learning (the Ways of Learning of Emperors and Kings and Ways of Learning of the Nine Schools); then charts of the celestial and terrestrial orders (Astronomy and Geography), and finally charts useful for envisioning the history and structure of government (the Succession of Emperors and Kings Chart and Bureaucratic System Chart). Huang was convinced that learning depended on mental understanding of what one studied (為學之道當體之以心); the fact that he employed these charts suggests that he saw a link between a comprehensive view – in the physical sense of sight – of a subject and an understanding of the subject.⁴¹ His map, Fig. 11, covers the territory of the Song dynasty and two northern states, the Jin dynasty of the Jurchens and the Xia dynasty

⁴⁰ Ni Pu 倪僕, Letter to Prefect (of Wuzhou in 1175 according to jhf2 11.13a) Zheng Boxiong 鄭伯熊, in *Ni Shiling shu* 倪石陵書 (Xu Jinhua congshu ed.) 9b-10b. Ni said his work, the *Yudi huiyuan zhi* (Record of the Realm Assembled) 輿地會元志, amounted to 300,000 words in 40 chapters; now lost. Ni's geography and map are also discussed by Song Lian and Wu Lai in a biography of Ni and preface to his writings, found in the forematter of this edition of his works.

⁴¹ *Song shi* 393.12000-1. Wang Yong 王庸, *Zhongguo dili xue shi* 中國地理學史, (Shanghai: Shang wu yin shu kuan, 1938; rpt. 1955), p. 35. For Wang's discussion of the Geography Chart (*dili tu*) see p. 78-9.

of the Tanguts. It names 368 prefectures, 623 military bases, 73 rivers, 27 lakes, 180 mountains, and 24 passes.⁴²

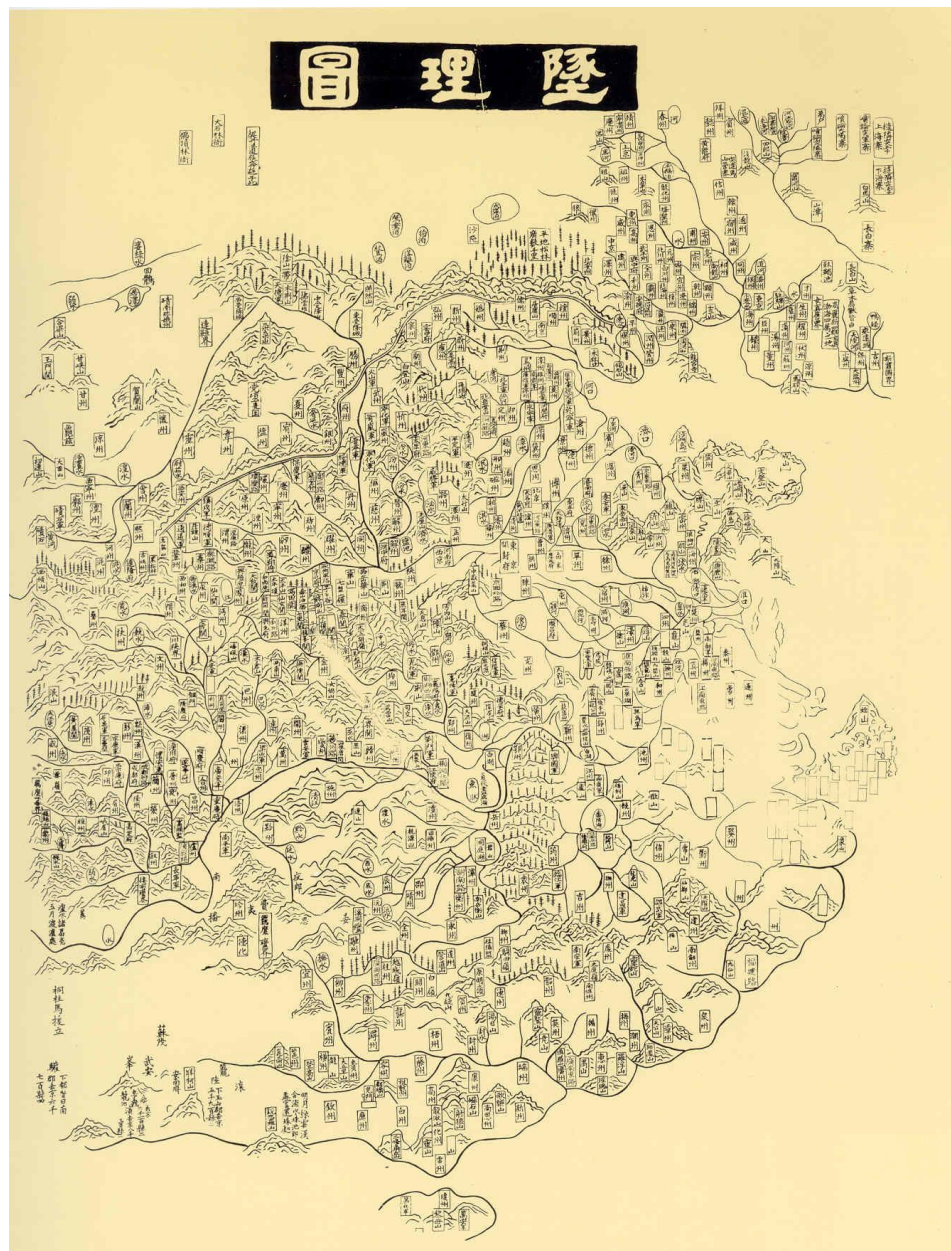


Fig. 11. Geographical Chart (地理圖), a tracing of the 1247 engraving of Huang Shang's map from 1190. Source: Cao Wanru, Zhongguo gudai ditu ji, vol. 1, plate 72.

Now if we grant that physical and administrative geography could each subsume the other, it follows that any place could be defined with reference to both or either. This does not, of itself, demonstrate that the “local” as a category existed, but it suffices, I think, to show that it is

⁴² This map, reproduced from the line drawing in Cao Wanru, Zhongguo gudai ditu ji, vol. 1, plate 72, was one of eight charts covering essential areas of knowledge prepared for the general education of the heir-apparent. Huang's maps was engraved in stone in 1247. See the Discussion in Cao and in Wang Yong, Zhongguo dili xue shi, p. 78.

too simple to assume the local was nothing more than that level of organization at which the administrative apparatus made direct contact with the population. As we have seen with Ban Gu, even some proponents of administrative supremacy recognized that the governmental apparatus existed in a potentially antagonistic relationship with what they conceived to be the “natural” population (and the physical landscape) they were seeking to transform.

Organizing history through geography

To this point the most we can say is that any locality could be defined as places in the administrative hierarchy of the moment and further described in terms of the many different kinds of places under that unit’s jurisdiction. At the same time we could say that a locality could be envisioned as quantities of space located with regard to presumed-to-be fixed landscape features. Although texts and maps could focus on either or both administrative place or physical space, prior to the Song they were essentially “slices in time.” That is, although some listings of administrative places gave accounts of past changes in name, administrative level, and administrative subordination, their goal was to describe the situation of a particular moment under a particular regime. Moreover, they do not reveal changes in the spatial extent of administrative units. This was particularly problematic in the south where, taking Wuzhou as an example, the spatial extent of administrative units had decreased as the number of units increased. To say that Wuzhou had once been Dongyang commandery was true administratively as this was where the seat was located, but not spatially, since the commandery included space that later became part of other prefectures.

If I could I would proceed from this point by making two arguments simultaneously, one spatial and the other temporal. The spatial argument is that in practice, despite the government’s claim to the primacy of the administrative hierarchy, even sources produced under local government sponsorship show there were at least three other significant spatial networks – economic, religious, and social – in addition to administrative hierarchies and physical systems. This leads to the conclusion that one way to define a locality would be to combine multiple networks and hierarchies. The temporal argument is that at a certain historical moment local places gained cumulative histories and that when this happened what was of a locale changed from being something that others could provisionally or retrospectively define (whether in terms of administrative, physical, economic, religious, and social systems, networks, and hierarchies) from something that began to constitute itself. The temporal argument helps explain why there came to be the very plentitude of data about local space and place, without which the spatial argument could not be made. I will thus begin with the temporal argument. It is a story about a new kind of national geography and a change in the nature of local records.

Changes in geographical and geohistorical writing

The new kind of national geography, which at first coexisted with the more purely administrative geography and then supplanted it, is represented by The Taiping Reign Period Record of the World from 976-983. The author, Yue Shi (930-1007) from Fuzhou 撫州 in Jiangxi, began his career an official of the Southern Tang, one of the kingdoms that arose in the south after the breakup of the Tang dynasty in 907.⁴³ The larger context for Yue’s work was, he explained, the conquest of the south and unification of the realm by Song during the Taiping

⁴³ Yue Shi 樂史, Taiping huanyu ji 太平寰宇記 (1793 ed.), for Wuzhou see 97.5b-10b.

reign period. It was meant to be both useful: giving an account of both domestic administration and foreign places and peoples and noting strategic geography; convenient: it allowed one to see the whole “without every leaving one’s room;” and celebratory: “If we do not revise the writings on the prefectures and counties how can we sing the praises of the one ruler over the myriad states, give glory to the one sage in a thousand years.” But Yue had another point to make about his work. He placed himself in the tradition of the two Tang national geographies of Jia Dan’s 賈耽 (730-805) account of the ten circuits and Li Jifu’s Charts and Treatises on Commanderries and Counties in the Yuanhe Reign Period from 806-814, but promised both greater detail and an updating to describe the new and different present.⁴⁴

But what made Yue’s book different (in comparison to Li’s extant work) were things his preface did not directly remark upon. First, it gives a far more elaborate administrative history than found in Li’s work or any dynastic history geography (in the case of Wuzhou it is twice as long). Second, it gives a brief statement of the historical character of the local inhabitants (justifying it on the grounds that this area was part of the region to which the labels were applied). Third, it names the most important clans in the local (although not for Wuzhou). Fourth, it names famous historical figures from here (two military figures and two literary or civil figures for Wuzhou). Fifth, it draws on private travelogues and records as well as official texts for anecdotes and descriptions that give local sites historical significance. Why is Xishui Brook worth noting? Because there was once a building here where the great writer Shen Yue (441-513) composed poetry. Why is it called Lord Xu’s lake? Because Lord Xu climbed the mountain to this lake and met Red Pine and Master Anqi making wine from the lake water, when he woke up after getting drunk he found moss growing on him! Why note the Lingyan Monastery? Because this is where Liu Jun 劉峻 (i.e. Liu Xiaobiao 劉孝標) of the Liang dynasty went when he quit office and wrote his Leiyuan in 120 *juan*.⁴⁵ And so on.

In short, Yue Shi culls the literary and historical record to depict administrative unit as containing places with historical significance outside of government, populations with their own character, and families with their own histories. This had not been done before.

It is possible to see The Taiping Reign Period Record of the World as a case for the legitimacy of the southern regions, places which (with the exception of the southeast) had little history compared to the north, the traditional base of the imperial court. Until the Song conquered the south it was merely the sixth in a series of short-lived dynasties based in the North China plain, and although it employed southern officials from the conquered regimes as local officials, at that point they were still suspect at a court dominated by northerners despite the fact that population and regional economies of the south had grown tremendously since the Tang was at the height of its powers. Yue Shi had aspirations for higher office and his geography, in 200 *juan*, proved his loyalty to his new ruler. But it also showed that south locales were in all important categories comparable to northern, that they too had histories and had contributed to culture.

What were the consequences of Yue’s efforts? Certainly the appearance during the Northern Song of historical geographies such as the Extended Record of the Realm and atlases such as Shui Anli’s, both of which defined past regimes and circuits in terms of present administrative units, suggests a growing interest in knowing the history of places. The one

⁴⁴ Li Jifu 李吉甫, Yuanhe jun xian tu zhi 元和郡縣圖志 (Wuying dian ju zhen ban ed.), for Wuzhou see 27.4b-7a.

⁴⁵ Yue Shi, Taiping huanyu ji 97.8a-9a.

official national geography that survives from the eleventh century, the Treatise on the Nine Regions in the Yuanfeng Reign Period, is administrative and ahistorical. Instead we must look to the private national geographies for Yue Shi's successors. The most extensive of these is Wang Xiangzhi's 王象之 Record of the Best Sites in the Realm (*Yudi jisheng* 輿地紀勝), a historical and cultural geography of Southern Song prefectures and counties in 200 juan and 16 juan of maps (now lost) from 1227.⁴⁶

Wang also traces the administrative history of the unit, but now with critical discussion of the sources including Northern Song historical geographies such as the Yudi guangji. His treatment of social mores and local character cites lines from diverse texts in chronological order and adds to this past characterizations of the wealth, flora, or culture of the area. He introduces a new category: a catalogue of the finest natural and man-made sights, describing both what they are (caves, mountains, monasteries, pavilions, etc.), the textual reference for their existence, changes in name over time, and literary appreciations of the sight. He adds a section on remains of past places of note and the historical personages, including religious figures, associated with them. Also new is the section on local officials, which lists in chronological order officials who either contributed to the well-being of the locale or were simply famous, with notes on the deeds which benefited the locality. His section on famous local personages is a chronological account with notes on the source of their fame. A section is devoted to Daoist immortals and Buddhist clergy. There is a section on steles and inscriptions found locally. Finally there are quotations of poetic couplets and whole poems written from the past that are connected to this place and quotations of parallel phrases and sentences from various official documents that bear on the place.

In his preface Wang distinguished his work from all earlier geographies, including the Taiping Reign Period Record of the World. Earlier geographies might have traced change over time and noted the strategic significance of the geography but, he asserts, he was the first to collect the best local sights; he had included all the famous things in every prefecture, so that a writer needed only turn to the right chapter to get everything he needed. Sima Qian had traveled and thus wanted to write; Wang had stayed at home and collected books, it was from books that he became interested in localities.⁴⁷

Wang was using the local as an organizing principle to compile a book that created cultural histories for all the prefectures and counties of Southern Song that served a particular audience: the relatively mobile literati society of officials and examination candidates. He assumed an audience for whom the "local" was important and who would want to refer to the specifics of locales in their writing. And although he traced administrative histories and the contributions of government officials to the local welfare, he depicted a world in which the local place outlasted political regimes and historical memory could be organized by place. He was soon imitated; Zhu Mu 祝穆 and later his son Zhu Zhu 祝洙 published □the Best Views of the Realm 方輿勝覽 in 70 chapters in 1239 and again in 1266-67.⁴⁸ These works became

⁴⁶ Wang Xiangzhi 王象之, Yudi jisheng 輿地紀勝, 8 vols. (Qing ed. rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1992). I have discussed this in Peter K. Bol, "The Rise of Local History: History, Geography, and Culture in Southern Song and Yuan Wuzhou", Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 61.1 (2001): 37-76 (54-64). See also Li Yongxian 李勇先, "Yudi jisheng" yanjiu 輿地紀勝研究, (Chengdu: Bashu chubanshe, 1998).

⁴⁷ Yudi jisheng, Wang Xiangzhi preface.

⁴⁸ For the 1266-67 edition and an appraisal of the text by Tan Qixiang 譚其驤 see *Song ben Fangyu shenglan* in 宋本方輿勝覽 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1991), pp. 1-33.

the model for a new kind of national geography in the Yuan and Ming periods, the “Unified Gazetteer” (*yitong zhi*).⁴⁹

Wang’s work was retrospective; he was creating pasts for places that now existed but which, in the south, had not been in existence for very long. He culled the literary record, to be sure, but he was enormously aided by the growing number of works being written to give the history of particular places.

These new works were the result of changes in the writing of local records at the prefecture and county level, mainly during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the south. In brief, the administrative “map guide” (*tujing*) was gradually transformed into the local history commonly known as the “local gazetteer” (地方志); by the Ming dynasty use of the term “map guide” had ceased. Five aspects to this transformation are worthy of note. First, greater detail was added and the works became longer. Second, historical material was added to give an account of a locale’s past and local literati. Third, authorship gradually shifted from local functionaries to local scholars. Fourth, the audience gradually shifted from central and local administrators to local readers. And fifth, the compilation of gazetteers became cumulative, with new editions including much of earlier editions and adding material from the intervening years.⁵⁰ As a result the disappearance of over ninety percent of the 343 Song period gazetteers does not betoken a loss of the information they collected.⁵¹ By the end of the sixteenth century much of the north was producing local gazetteers as well. Today there are about 8500 of these new Song-style gazetteers extant, totaling over 125,000 chapters.⁵² Beginning in the 1980s all counties and modern prefectures (*shi*) once again began publish local gazetteers, albeit in a new format.⁵³

The writing of local history by – and principally for – a local audience can be seen as one of the many outcomes of the profound changes that took place from the mid-eighth century into the Southern Song. In essence, the Tang dynasty was led by an oligarchy (or state sponsored aristocracy) of great clans who during the course of the dynasty left their earlier local power bases and made government service the family occupation. Until the mid-eighth century when, in the aftermath of a rebellion by the general in command of the northeastern border (An Lushan), provincial commanders began to increase their autonomy and control over local revenues, the Tang system had been a highly centralized system in which ideally there was a unified hierarchy of political power, wealth, social status, and culture centered on the court. In principle the government controlled all land, redistributing it to farmers in return for an assessment per adult of tax in kind and labor or military service while granting officials estates and tax exemptions. Trade was strictly controlled and silk was the most important store of value. As this centralized system and command economy deteriorated three things happened. First, the state lost control of the land and a private land market emerged and the tax system was fundamentally altered to tax

⁴⁹Bolanxi 孛蘭肸 and Yue Xuan 岳鉉, ed., *Da Yuan da yitong zhi* 大元大一統志, (Taipei: Guoli zhongyang tushu guan, rpt. 1985). Li Xian 李賢, *Da Ming yitong zhi* 大明一統志 of 1461 exists in various editions.

⁵⁰ For a discussion of the rise of the local gazetteer see James M. Hargett, “Song Dynasty Local Gazetteers and their Place in the History of *Difangzhi* Writing”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 56.2 (1996): 405-42.

⁵¹ Aoyama Sadao 青山定雄, “Tō Sō chihōshi mokuroku oyobi shiryō koshō” 唐宋地方誌目錄及ひ資料考證, *Yokohama shiritsu daigaku kiyō* (1958).

⁵² The most complete account of all known editions of gazetteers is Jin Enhui 金恩輝, ed., *Zhongguo difang zhi zongmu tiyao* 中國地方志總目提要 (Taipei: Han Mei tushu youxian gongsi, 1996).

⁵³ On the new style of gazetteer see Stig Thøgersen, and Søren Clausen, “New Reflections on the Mirror: Local Chinese Gazetteers (*difangzhi*) in the 1980s”, *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 27 (1992): 1-24.

family wealth.⁵⁴ Second, the state lost control over commerce and began to tax it, and commercialization and urbanization leaped ahead. As a market economy began to take shape, the state increased the money supply. In 740 the annual mint was about 275,000 “strings” of bronze cash (one string was supposed to be 1000 cash but the actual number might be as much as 20% less). In 1050 the annual mint was about 1.5 million strings of cash. By the 1080s the annual mint was about 4.5 million strings.⁵⁵ Third, the northern border peoples created state systems on the Chinese model to which Chinese dynasties responded by increasing the size of mercenary armies and buying peace through massive subsidies and trade. Fourth, the national elite changed. As the center’s scope of control shrank the value of an aristocratic pedigree disappeared. The ultimate outcome was a national political elite that was defined by education rather than family status, and that was selected through a national system of examinations and prepared through a system of county and prefectural schools, supplemented by private academies. The new bureaucracy was staffed by learned but often ideological bureaucrats, but these bureaucrats were but a small part of a very large pool of similarly educated men. State investment in schools and the general openness of the examination system resulted in a dramatic expansion of the educated elite, those who thought of themselves “literati” (*shi* 士), so that by the mid-thirteenth century as many as 400,000 participated in the triennial examination cycle, out of whom only about 600 obtained the highest degree.

Between the 1040s and the 1120s some political reformers sought to expand state activities so as to gain greater leverage over the new society and economy. When this attempt was rejected a situation emerged that would be characteristic of the later imperial era. The role of the government in society, economy, and culture was limited, yet the proportion of well-to-do local families who acquired a literati education increased. The result was a profound change in the character of the national elite. Instead of being constituted by bureaucratic families who saw government service as the main family occupation, and who depended upon office to maintain their privileged position in society, the new national elite was constituted by local elites, groups of families who kept up literati education and social practices but, because members rarely served in government, remained locally resident and intermarried. These often powerful lineages played increasingly important roles in local society and, although supportive of the state, also defended local interests in the face of state demands.⁵⁶ These literati elites were the principal authors of and audience for local histories and the local histories paid particular attention to their endeavors. This is evident from the content of the gazetteers and from their maps, which typically diagrams only two building complexes, the yamen and the county school, and often

⁵⁴ For the Tang elite see David Johnson, *The Medieval Chinese Oligarchy* (Boulder: The Westview Press, 1977). On the diminution of central authority see Charles A. Peterson, “Court and Province in Mid- and Late T’ang” *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 3: Sui and T’ang China*, 589-906, ed. Denis Twitchett, and John K. Fairbank. On the changes in the financial system see Denis C. Twitchett, *Financial Administration Under the T’ang Dynasty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

⁵⁵ Gao Congming 高聰明. *Songdai huobi yu huobi liutong yanjiu* 宋代貨幣與貨幣流通研究. (Baoding: Hebei daxue chubanshe, 1999), p. 103.

⁵⁶ On the role of the examination system see John W. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates Learning in Sung China: A Social History of Examinations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). The nature of the social transition was defined most clearly by Robert Hartwell, “Demographic, Political, and Social Transformation of China, 750-1550”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42.2 (1982): 365-442, and Robert P. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen: The Elite of Fu-Chou, Chiang-Hsi, in Northern and Southern Sung*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). For a survey of the relevant literature see Peter K. Bol., *“This Culture of Ours” -- Intellectual Transitions in T’ang and Sung China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992). Ch. 2.

make the school complex, so important for certifying men as literati (and granting them certain tax exemptions), as large as the yamen, as in Fig. 12,

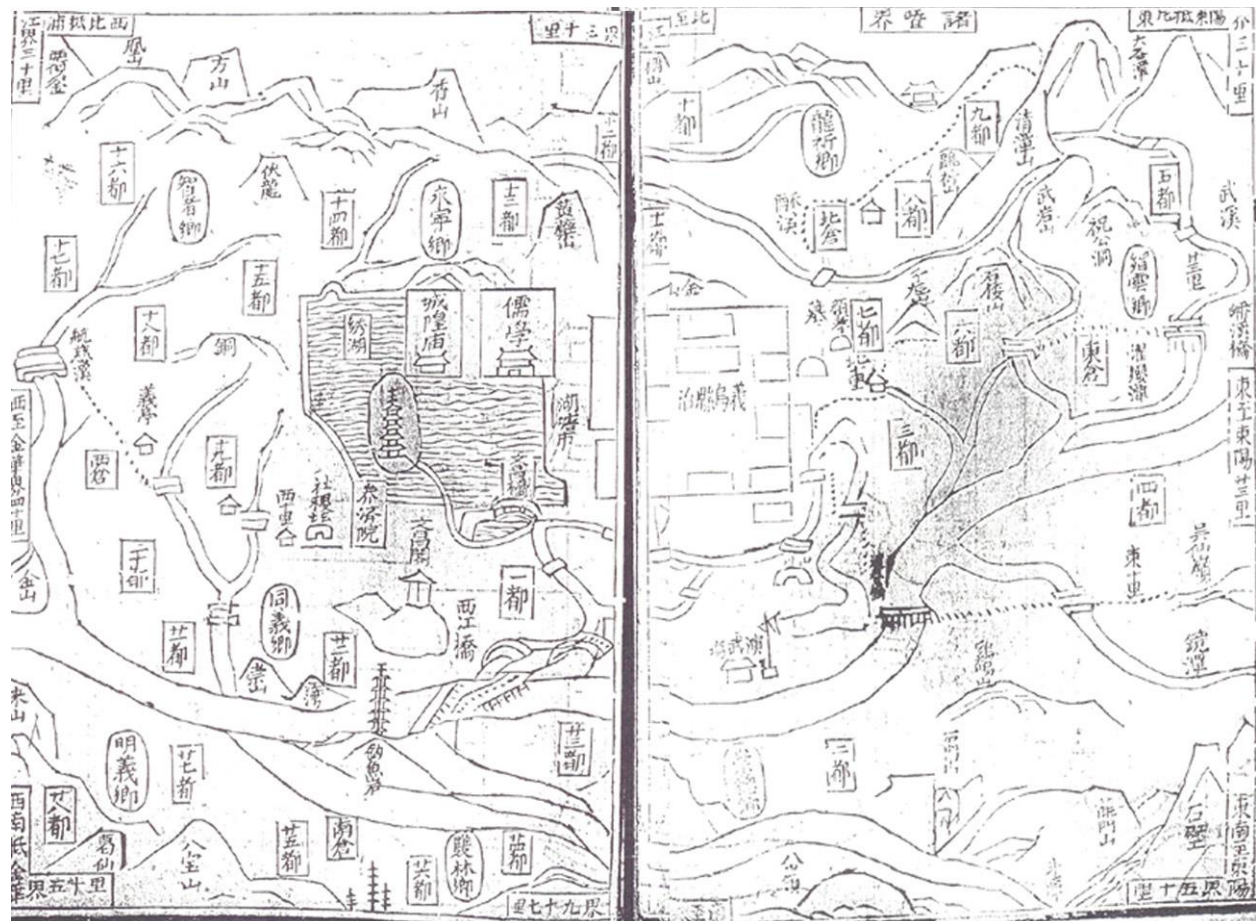


Fig. 12 The county school (left) and government offices (right) of Yiwu 義烏 county. Source: *Yiwu xianzhi* (1596 ed.)

In addition to the local cumulative production of gazetteers, literati began to compile biographical collections and anthologies of philosophical, literary, and statecraft writings by local figures. In Wuzhou this began to happen in the Yuan dynasty and was revived in the Ming, when over forty such works appeared.⁵⁷ Through their local gazetteers and local anthologies literati were constituting the local as something more than an administrative extension of the state and physical geographical space. In doing so they had the support of many but not all centrally appointed local officials, for local officials were also literati who had been brought up in places where the formation of a literati community with a strong local identity was applauded. The quality of local gazetteers varies, some involved rigorous empirical scholarship, others were rather slap-dash compilations, others show the signs of interference by powerful local interests, and others were written to promote a particular ideological position. In some cases specialists in gazetteer writing were hired to oversee the compilation of the work, in others it was a voluntary

⁵⁷ Discussed in Bol, "The 'Localist Turn' and 'Local Identity' in Later Imperial China," *Late Imperial China* 24.2 (2002): 1-51.

local effort. Some editors saw local history as a vital area of historical research, whereas others did not.⁵⁸

The multiplicity of spatial networks

To say that the local began to constitute itself is simply to say that localities began to write and maintain their own cumulative histories of their place as something that continued to have an identity as political regimes rose and fell. The writing of local history during the last millennium of China's history has provided an extraordinary body of data on natural and man-made sites, administrative organization, the economy, education, individuals, climatic events, and social activities. Here I want to show that local histories constitute the local by combining multiple networks and systems, and thus denied the exclusive claims of the administrative hierarchy.

Religious networks

Religious institutions were located in urban centers and throughout the countryside. At times prior to the Song dynasty varying proportions of them belonged to national networks organized under court patronage with some degree of hierarchy. The instances of state confiscation of Buddhist monastic property and the forced laicization of the clergy – the last dramatic case before the twentieth century being in the mid-ninth century⁵⁹ – suggest both a state that assumed that religion existed within the state system and a religious institution that sought economic and social independence from political authority. In later periods the state might confer recognition on specific monasteries and free the land from tax obligations at the same time it sought to derive revenue from Buddhism (e.g. through the sale of ordination certificates) but by and large monastic institutions depended on private patronage. The traditional generalization that Buddhism “declined” after the Tang dynasty may have some validity in terms of elite ideology but is simply not true in terms of the monastic establishment. Periods of private economic growth brought with them periods of temple building, for example during 1100-1400 and 1550-1700.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Zhang Xuecheng (1739-1801) is often seen as one of the first to see local history as an occasion for serious historical research. See the discussion in David S. Nivison, *The Life and Thought of Chang Hsueh Ch'eng (1738-1801)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), pp. 45-50, 215-6. Leaving aside the question of whether earlier work met Zhang's standards, it is clear that many earlier gazetteers were seen as serious scholarly projects. See, for example, the history of the compilation of the Jiankang gazetteer of 1261 in *Jingding Jiankang zhi* 景定建康志 (Song Yuan fangzhi congshu ed.) forematter, 13b-29b. Jinhua gazetteers vary considerably. Zhang Mou's editing of the gazetteer of Lanxi from 1510 reflected his Neo-Confucian convictions, but the 1578 Jinhua prefectural gazetteer pointedly moved away from Neo-Confucian ideology by made a particular attention to take into account local literati opinion. The Dongyang county gazetteer of 1681 is an example of extensive scholarship. For a case study of how local interests influenced the compilation of a gazetteer to their own advantage see Joseph Dennis, “Between Lineage and State: Extended Family and Gazetteer Compilation in Xinchang County”, *Ming Studies* 45-46 (2001): 69-113.

⁵⁹ During his Daoist phase Emperor Huizong (r. 1100-25) ordered the conversion of all Buddhist monasteries to Daoist use, but not their destruction. See Patricia Buckley Ebrey, “Art and Taoism in the Court of Song Huizong” *Taoism and the Arts of China*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000): 101-18.

⁶⁰ Following Wolfram Eberhard, “Temple Building Activities in Medieval and Modern China: An Experimental Study,” Eberhard, *Moral and Social Values of the Chinese: Collected Essays* (Taipei: CMC, 1971). These conclusions were based on case study of religious sites recorded in local gazetteers. Jinhua was one of the cases.

Buddhist institutions in particular remained important in cultural life and in the local economy.⁶¹ Buddhist and the far less numerous Daoist institutions had national distribution but were not centralized. Sometimes they were tied to particular sects (e.g. Celestial Heart Daoism) or defined by type (e.g. a meditation or teaching monastery). In Song and later times these religious sites formed a shifting network that allowed lateral communication rather than a parallel to the administrative hierarchy. In addition there were many sorts of local shrines and cult temples.

At certain times state policy or in some places particularly hostile officials launched attacks on local cults, but they have been quite resilient (and are reappearing today). From a national perspective only a handful of local religious institutions were worthy of mention, but from a local perspective they filled the landscape. To illustrate this consider Fig. 13, a county map from 1265.

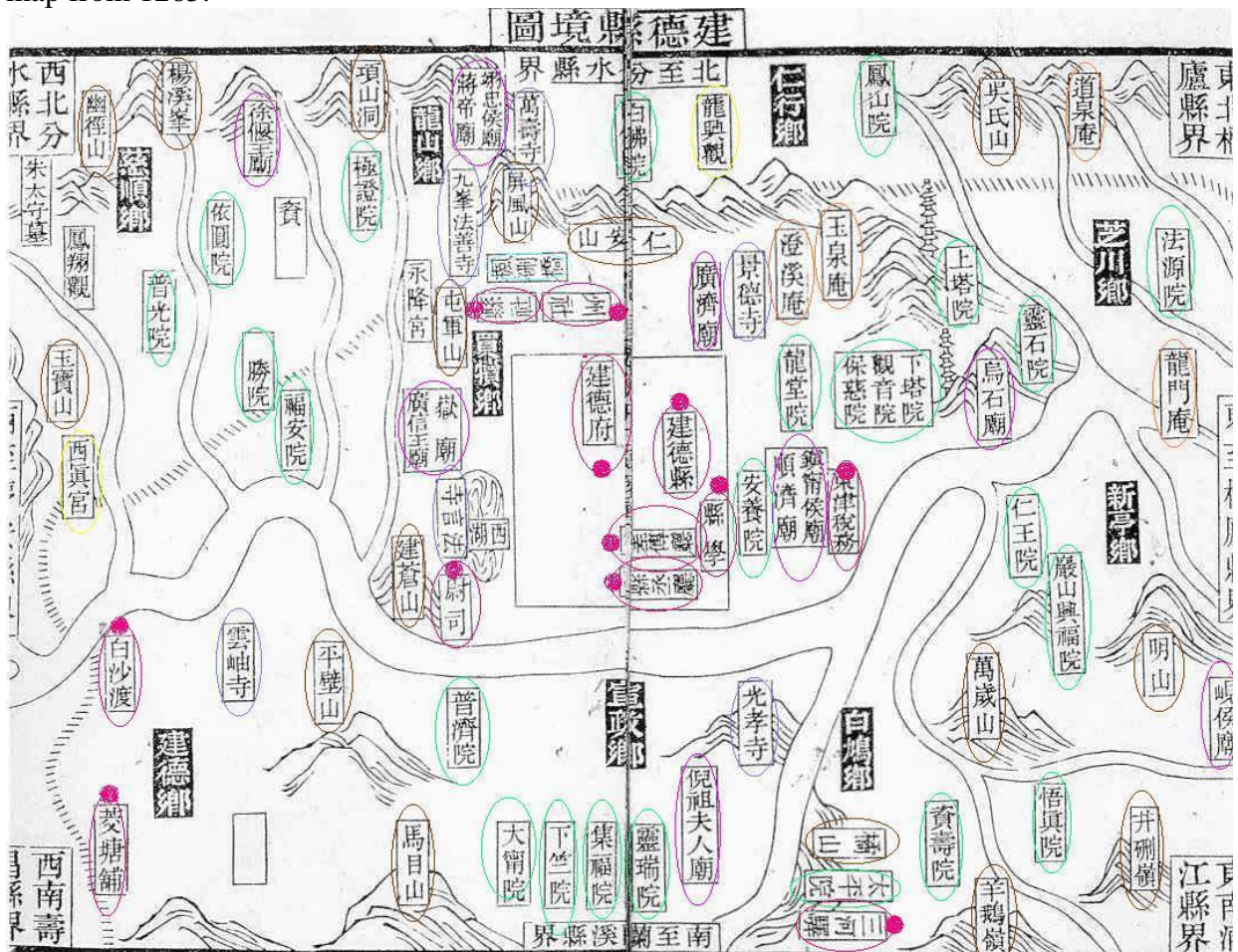


Fig. 13. Jiande County. Jiande Prefecture. Religious sites include 2 Daoist Temples (yellow), 6 Buddhist monasteries (blue), 23 Buddhist cloisters (green), 4 Buddhist nunneries (light brown), and 11 cult shrines (purple). Government sites (red with a dot) include government administrative offices, a tax station, 2 postal stations, a school, a bridge, and a ford. Natural features (brown) include 14 mountains and one cave complex. There were nine cantons in this county (labeled white against black).

Source: *Yanzhou tujing* 嚴州圖經, original from 1139 with maps from 1265. Discussed in Cao Wanru, *Zhongguo gudai ditu ji*, vol. 1, for plate 117.

⁶¹ Huang Minzhi 黃敏枝, *Songdai fojiao shehui jingji shi lunji* 宋代佛教社會經濟史論集, (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1989).

In this map local space consists of the county seat, the center of the map, religious institutions, rivers and named mountains, and the road. In this world religious institutions provide the bulk of public space. It is a map of noteworthy features and the cantons that subdivided the county rather than society – we have no sense of where the people live. Gazetteers vary greatly in the quality and detail of their maps, and although all the maps for Jinhua counties show religious sites the many lists they compile show that they have far more data than a map of customary size could represent. Thus, for example, the 1480 Jinhua prefectural gazetteer lists 824 religious establishments in its 8 subordinate counties, each identified by name, its distance and direction from the county seat, and often the date of founding.⁶² Fig. 14 plots the locations of named religious sites in one county in 1480.

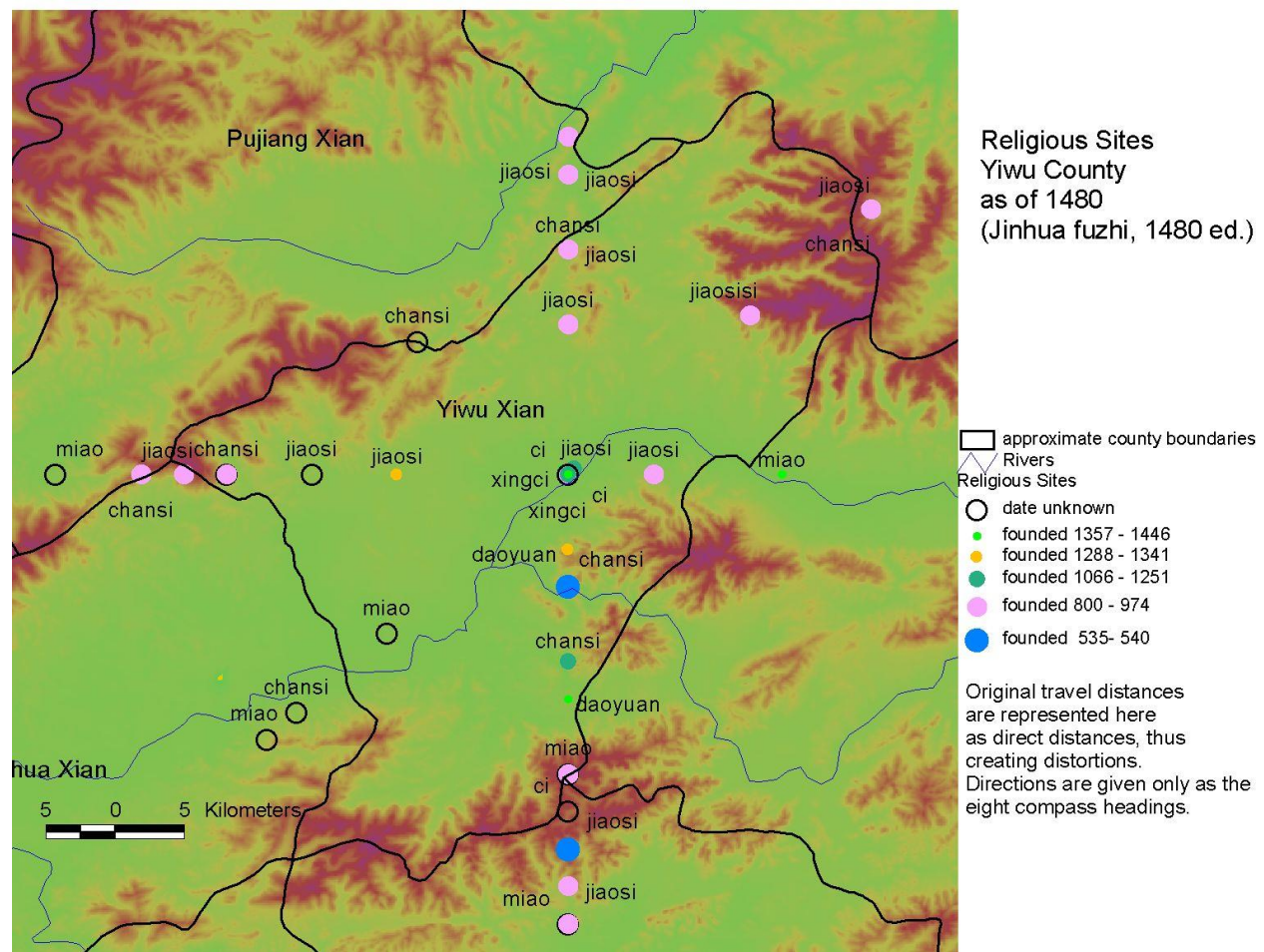


Fig. 14. Religious sites in Yiwu county in 1480. Plotted relative to the county seat according to the eight directions and treating travel distance as rectilinear distances. Source: *Jinhua fuzhi* (1480 ed.).

Because local gazetteers were revised and updated, it is possible to trace the expansion and contraction of religious sites for some areas from the twelfth century into the present day.

⁶² *Jinhua fuzhi* (1480 ed.), 13.1a-54b.

Buddhist and Daoist institutions constituted a network through which clergy and laity could travel and where they could interact. Equally important was the emergence of regional deities and networks of cult shrines, a development connected to the growing market economy of the Song period. Gods who were once generated and worshipped locally such as Five Manifestations (五顯), King Zhang (張王), Zitong (梓童), and the Heavenly Consort (天后) began to be worshipped in dedicated temples or shrines throughout a region and local supporters successfully sought official recognition from the court.⁶³

The importance of religious institutions to the constitution of the local lies not only in their pervasiveness, but also in their function as a non-administrative centers for local social organization. Temple and shrine management committees provided venues for local leaders to organize communal activities. Gods, and their shrines, were often related to each other in hierarchies that defined patterns of local dominance, and in many instances cults not only claimed a privileged place in defining membership in a community but also “taxed” members of that community in support of festivals and shrine upkeep.⁶⁴ In short, religious institutions served as another network with which the local was defined.

Literati local elites and local lineages

The transformation of the *shi* from a national elite defined by office-holding to a national elite of locally resident educated men, officially recognized through occasional participation in the examination system, resulted in many places in self-sustaining high-culture communities. The men and (by the seventeenth century) women who were part of them produced literary collections and local historical compilations, wrote commemorative inscription for local buildings, bridges, and religious institutions, formed literary societies, gathered at state schools and private academies for examinations and lectures, and joined in various kinds of associations. They produced a body of local knowledge and memory that did not depend on or answer to the state’s reporting apparatus. Local gazetteers, with their biographies, lists of examination candidates and enrolled students, catalogs of books written by locals, and selections from local writers, offered literati the chance to be remembered whether or not they gained rank in the administrative system. The importance of literati elites is evident from a national map from ca. 1266, the top half is reproduced in Fig. 15, showing in the upper left a table of the quotas for the prefectural civil service examinations.

⁶³ Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China 1127-1276* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 128-59.

⁶⁴ For a discussion of the ways in which cults functioned in local society see Barend Ter Haar, “Local Society and the Organization of Cults in Early Modern China: A Preliminary Study”, *Studies in Central and East Asian Religions* 8 (1995): 1-43; David Faure, “What Weber Did Not Know: Towns and Economic Development in Ming and Qing China” *Town and Country in China: Identity and Perception*, ed. David Faure, and Tao Tao Liu, (Houndsmills: Palgrave, 2002): 58-84; and Richard von Glahn, “Towns and Temples: Urban Growth and Decline in the Yangzi Delta, 1100-1400” *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, ed. Paul Smith, and Richard von Glahn, (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003): 176-211.

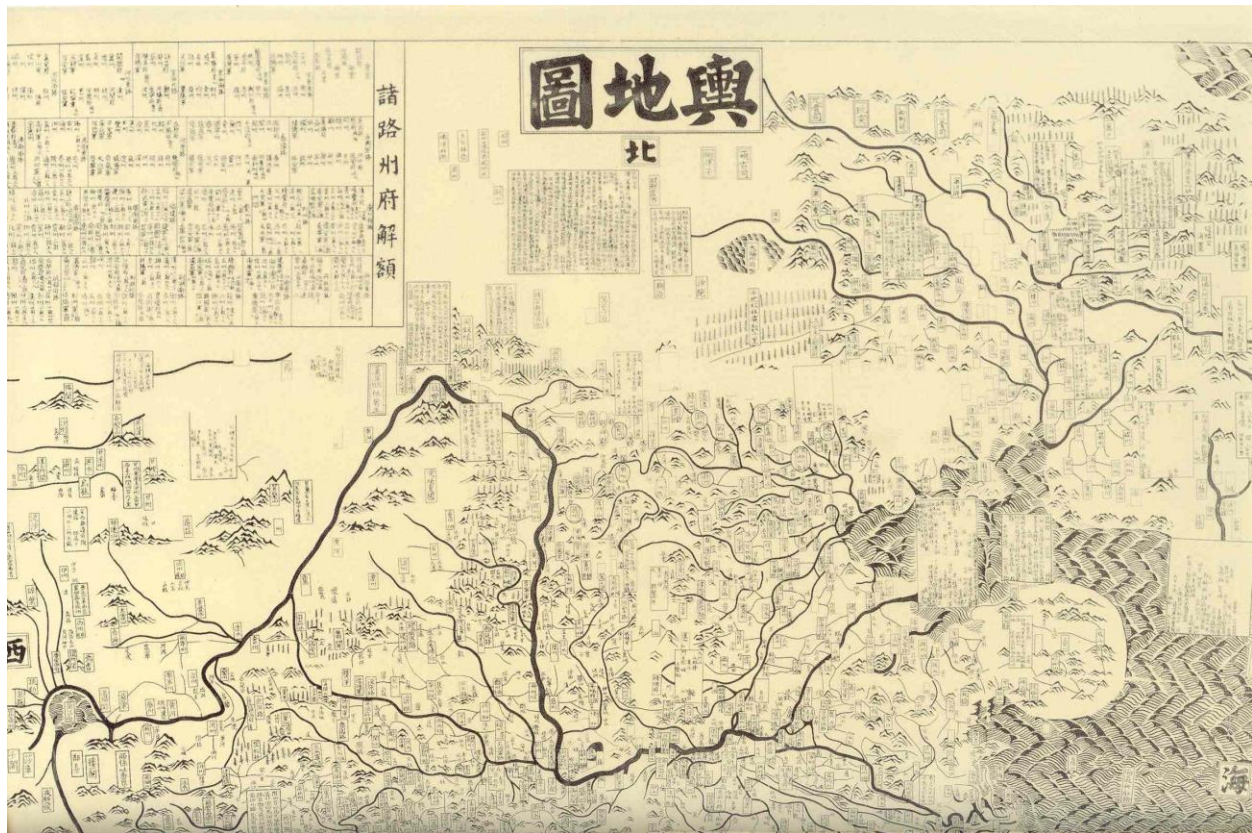


Fig. 15. “Map of the Realm” – from between 1265 and 1274. Only a rubbing of the original, held by a Japanese monastery, is known to have survived. Source: Cao, *Zhongguo gudai ditu ji*. Plate 83; redrawing.

In effect this map offered competitiveness as a means of judging the significance of place from a literati perspective.

But in the eyes of growing numbers of literati kinship relations provided the most important bottom-up local network. A new kind of lineages or descent group, one that promoted the solidarity of the extended network of kin descended from a common ancestor, was a social consequence of the changes that took place during the Tang-Song transition. They had family rituals, halls for worshipping ancestors, and “genealogies.”⁶⁵ By the fourteenth century influential literati in Jinhua and elsewhere were promoting the compilation and updating of lineage genealogies on the grounds that, first, the genealogy was essential to defining membership and keeping proper relationships in the lineage and, second, the well-behaved lineage was the true foundation of social order.⁶⁶ Like local gazetteers genealogies were updated every few generations and provide a wealth of information, albeit of varying reliability, about

⁶⁵ Patricia Buckley Ebrey, “The Early Stages in the Development of Descent Group Organization” *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China*, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and James L. Watson, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986): 16-6; and Robert P. Hymes, “Marriage, Descent Groups, and the Localist Strategy in Sung and Yuan Fu-chou” *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China, 1000-1940*, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey, and James L. Watson, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986): 95-136.

⁶⁶ For a discussion of how this took place in Wuzhou/Jinhua see Peter K. Bol, “Local History and Family in Past and Present” *The New and the Multiple: Sung Senses of the Past*, ed. Thomas H. C. Lee, (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, forthcoming).

family history, the location of lineage segments, and marriage alliances with other lineage. More importantly in many places genealogies became common to all powerful lineages, irrespective of any immediate connections to traditions of official service or literati culture. These works have survived in large numbers⁶⁷ and today families are once again compiling them.

Gazetteers do not, at least in Jinhua, try to give an account of the major local lineages. But some do. One edition of the Yiwu county gazetteer provides maps from each canton. This example comes from Zhizhe Canton, circled in Fig. 16

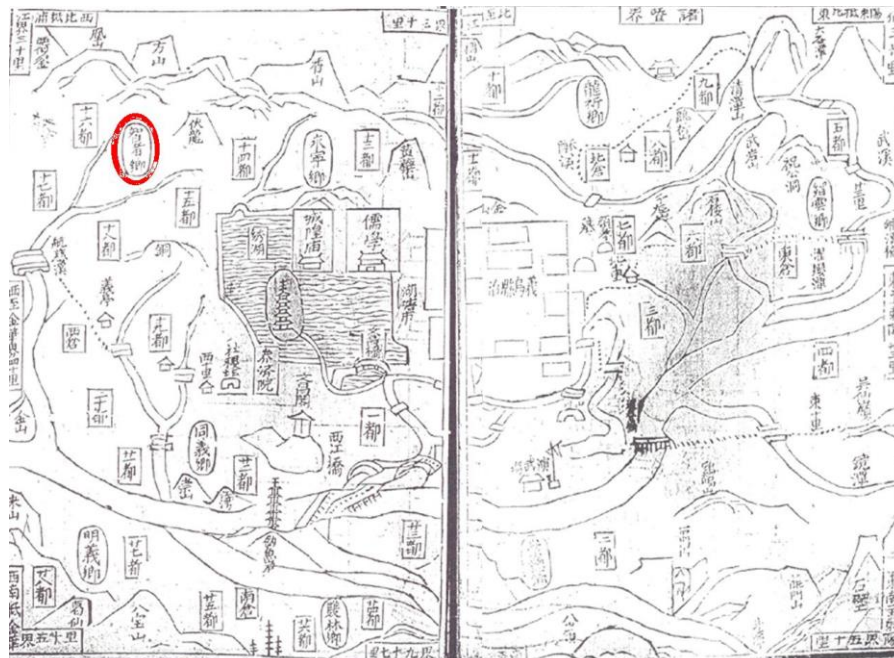
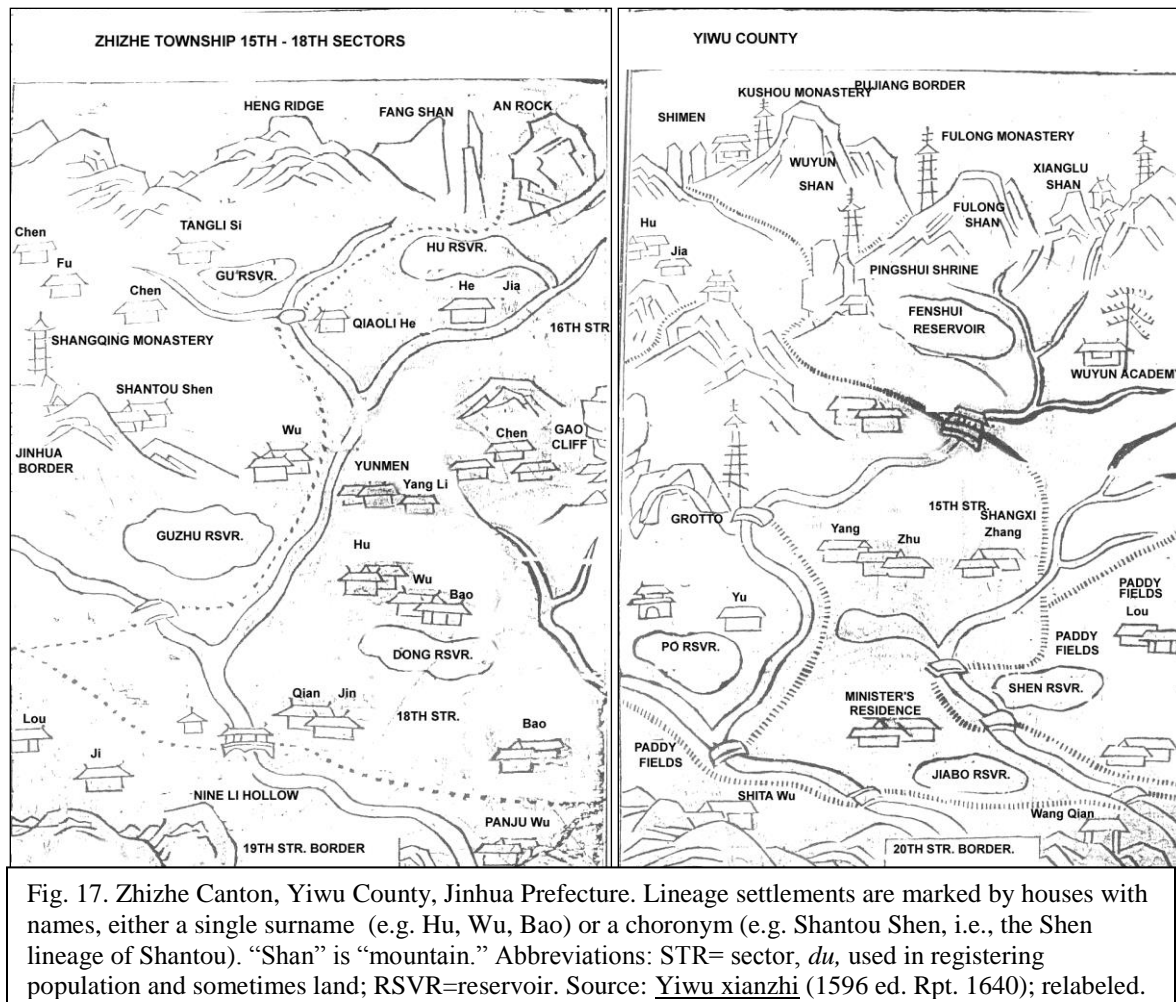


Fig. 16. Yiwu 義烏 county, Source: *Yiwu xianzhi* (1596 ed. Rpt. 1640). The county seat and school are at the right and left center. Zhizhe canton is circled in red.

The map of this canton (Fig. 17), like all the other canton maps from this edition, depicts local major landscape features, religious sites, sectors or townships (*du*), reservoirs and, and the major lineages. Many of these may in fact have been towns with dominant or single lineages, but rather than naming the towns the compilers have simply identified the lineage and, most likely, the existence of an ancestral hall.

⁶⁷ The Shanghai Library holds over 2000 editions of genealogies for Jinhua prefecture alone.



What this map does not show, but genealogies record, is that then, as now, kinship connections crossed the boundaries of administrative units. Kinship thus provided yet another spatial network, one that had internal hierarchical distinctions between main branches and side branches, that was part of the definition of the local. Genealogies also contained maps, such as in Fig. 18.

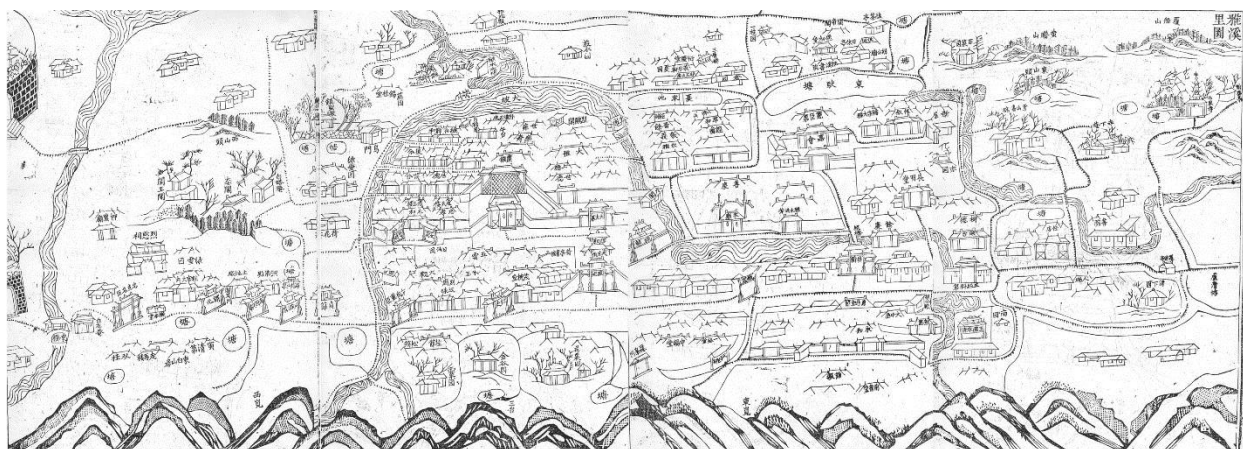


Fig. 18. Map of the Lu family compound in the 18th century; located outside the east gate of Dongyang. Lesser branches of the family lived in surrounding towns. The lineage ancestral hall is located to the right of the half-circle stream. Source: Yaxi Lu shi zong pu 雅溪 盧氏宗譜

Marketing systems

The last kind of network I want to address is the economic hierarchy. There is an argument, most notably developed by G. William Skinner, which holds that one consequence of the Tang-Song transition was a general retreat of the state from the provision of goods and services. Despite the effort by the New Policies administrations of the late Northern Song to expand the role of government and give it a greater role in the growing economy and more mobile society, ultimately the top-down administrative hierarchy which had been so successful in the Han and Tang empires was not expanded in line with population growth. The evidence for this is the fact that the centrally appointed bureaucracy and the total number of counties and prefectures remained more or less constant, even as the population grew from 100 million at the end of the eleventh century to 450 million by the end of the nineteenth. What replaced the weak status as the backbone of the unified empires that have characterized the last millennium was an economic hierarchy of regional marketing systems.⁶⁸ Hierarchies of marketing networks which provided a “bottom-up” structure for social, economic, and cultural life, and ultimately constituted regional systems which had their own economic cycles. Thus rather than looking at Chinese history through the lens of a “top-down” administrative hierarchy, historical analysis needs to be based on particular regional systems.⁶⁹

Others share the view that by Song times the expansion of commerce was separating the economic hierarchy from the administrative hierarchy, whereas when the Tang state still had full control it was assumed that from the capital on down the centers of population and wealth were also the centers of administration. Some of the evidence for this emerging separation comes from a complete set of government commercial tax quotas disaggregated down to the tax collection station level) for the year 1077. Mapping this data for Liangzhe circuit (equivalent to modern Zhejiang province, southern Jiangsu, and eastern Anhui) in Fig. 19 illustrates the fact that major economic centers had developed outside of prefectural and county seats and that now there were county seats that had quotas in excess of prefectural seats and market towns that had quotas that surpassed county seats.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Skinner, G. William “Introduction: Urban Development in Imperial China” *The City in Late Imperial China*. Ed. G. William Skinner. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977. 3-32.

⁶⁹ G. William Skinner, “Presidential Address: The Structure of Chinese History”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 44.2 (1985): 271-92 (290). And also Robert Hartwell, “Demographic, Political, and Social Transformation of China, 750-1550”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42.2 (1982): 365-442.

⁷⁰ Guo Zhengzhong, *Liang Song chengxiang shangpin huobi jingji kaolue*, p. 229-301. Cf. Shiba Yoshinobu 斯波義信. *Sōdai no toshika wo kangaeru* 宋代の都市化を考える. *Tōhōgaku* 東方學 102 (2001): 1-19.

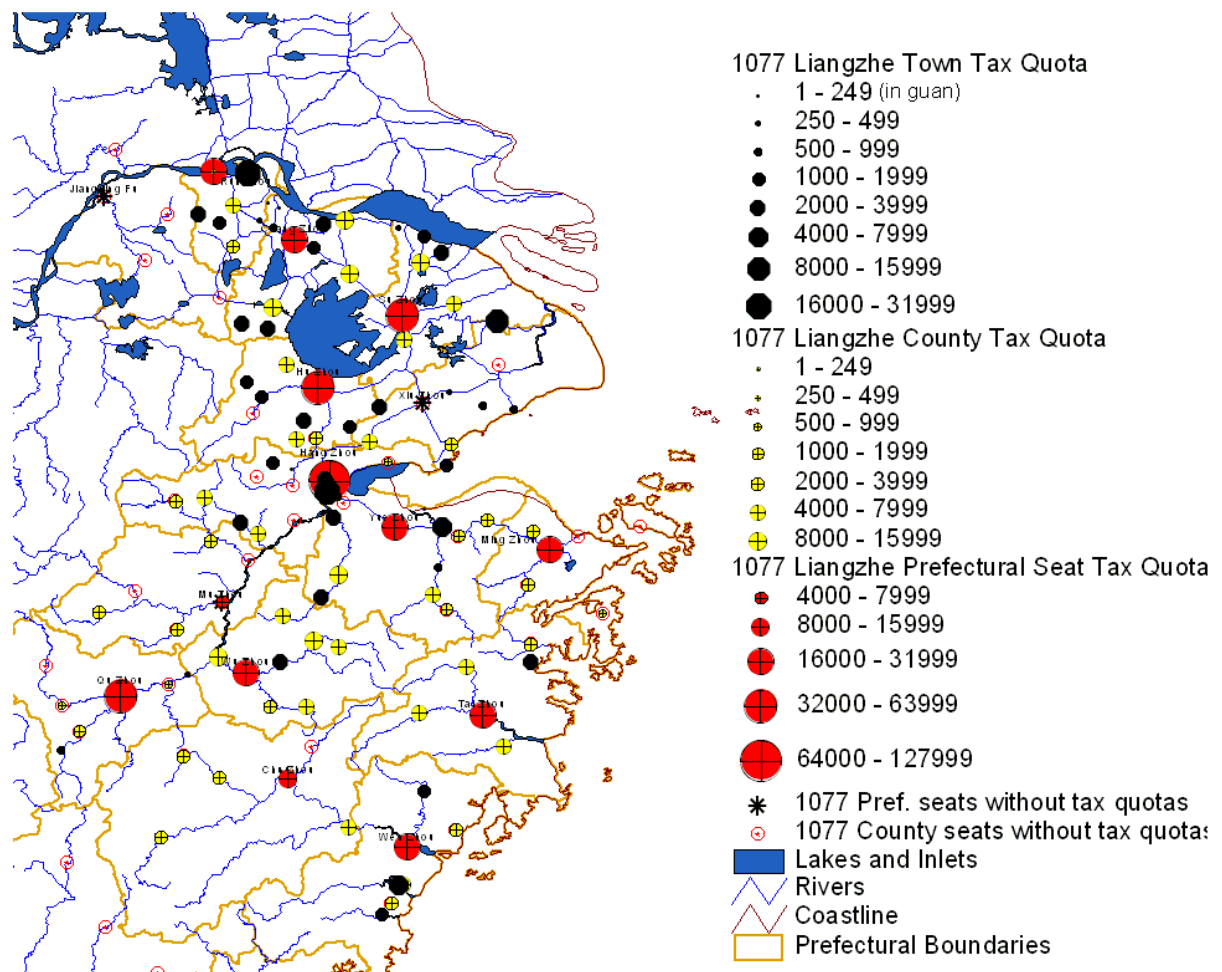


Fig. 19. **Commercial tax** quotas for 1077 relative to the administrative hierarchy of Liangzhe (modern Zhejiang, southern Jiangsu, and eastern Anhui provinces). This corresponds to only part of the Lower Yangzi macroregion of late Qing. Sources: *Song huiyao* (on-line edition) for tax data; CHGIS for the administrative hierarchy as of 1077.

The merchants who traveled through the markets not only kept records, they also kept route books, giving us a geographical source grounded in the commercial economy rather than the state apparatus.⁷¹

The argument against the primacy of regional systems, for example by Timothy Brook, is that although the hierarchy of administrative places with centrally appointed officials did not grow, the county administrative apparatus from the canton down to the “township” 都 and “ward” 圖, together with state-mandated registration systems such as the Ming *lijia* 里甲 system ensured that all inhabitants were constantly aware of their place in the administrative structure.⁷²

⁷¹ These route books and the vision of the nation implied by them is the subject of Du Yongtao, “Translocality, Place Making, and Cultural Formation: Huizhou Merchants in Late Imperial China, 1500-1800,” Ph. D. Diss. University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, forthcoming. For a discussion and bibliography of various kinds of route books see Timothy Brook, *Geographical Sources of Ming-Qing History* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1988). Note that Brook strongly doubts that there was an independent economic hierarchy.

⁷² Timothy Brook, “The Spatial Structure of Ming Local Administration,” *Late Imperial China* 6.1 (1985): 1-55. For another challenge to Skinner see Yue Zumou, “Development of Regional Systems in Pre- and Early Imperial

One can grant this, however, and still not be convinced that the system of townships and wards (which stem from the “superior guards” decimal organization of the population and “maps” used to record landholdings in Song) were imposed in such a way that they accorded with the network of villages on the ground.⁷³ In Jinhua at least it is not clear what the correspondence was between the Song, Yuan, or Ming subcounty administrative hierarchies and the actual villages

For my purposes, however, it is enough to see that both administrative and economic systems provided meaningful and overlapping ways of organizing social life and terms of reference for constituting a locality. In Jinhua the prefectural and county gazetteers listed named markets just they listed mountains and religious sites: by specifying the distance and direction from the county seat. As Fig. 20 shows, none of the markets corresponds to the names of subcounty administrative units or are treated as subordinate to them.

China,” (Ph. D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1994), who argues that the urban hierarchy and macroregions were not created by marketing systems but by political processes.

⁷³ Brook, “The Spatial Structure of Ming Local Administration”, argues that “The Ming *lijia* system was consciously designed as an exception to this general rule of conformity to prior spatial organization, but there is little evidence that its implementation at the local level followed policy at the top.” He supports the contention that there was no real contradiction between the state system and “natural villages” by noting the that the imposition of state systems in the PRC involved structuring new administrative units around existing villages (p. 4). However, in his quantitative analysis showing population per ward (Tables 1,3 and 5) the averages are so similar that it looks like the number of units was determined by quota rather than villages, unless one assumes that villages were all the same size. It remains to be shown that *du* and *tu* corresponded to villages. In the Jinhua case it is striking that village names are not recorded. The *du* are located in terms of distance from the county seat, and given names with the formula “this land 土 is named XXX, it compiles households 編戶 so-many charts.” In some cases the name corresponds to a modern village, but in many cases it does not. In at least one case a village is mentioned in passing which is not the name of the *du*. Moreover, in cases where the extent of the *du* is described it is hard to imagine that the number of villages in the area would been limited to the three or four *tu* mentioned. See *Jinhua xianzhi* (1655 ed.) 1.7b, for Chisong xiang.

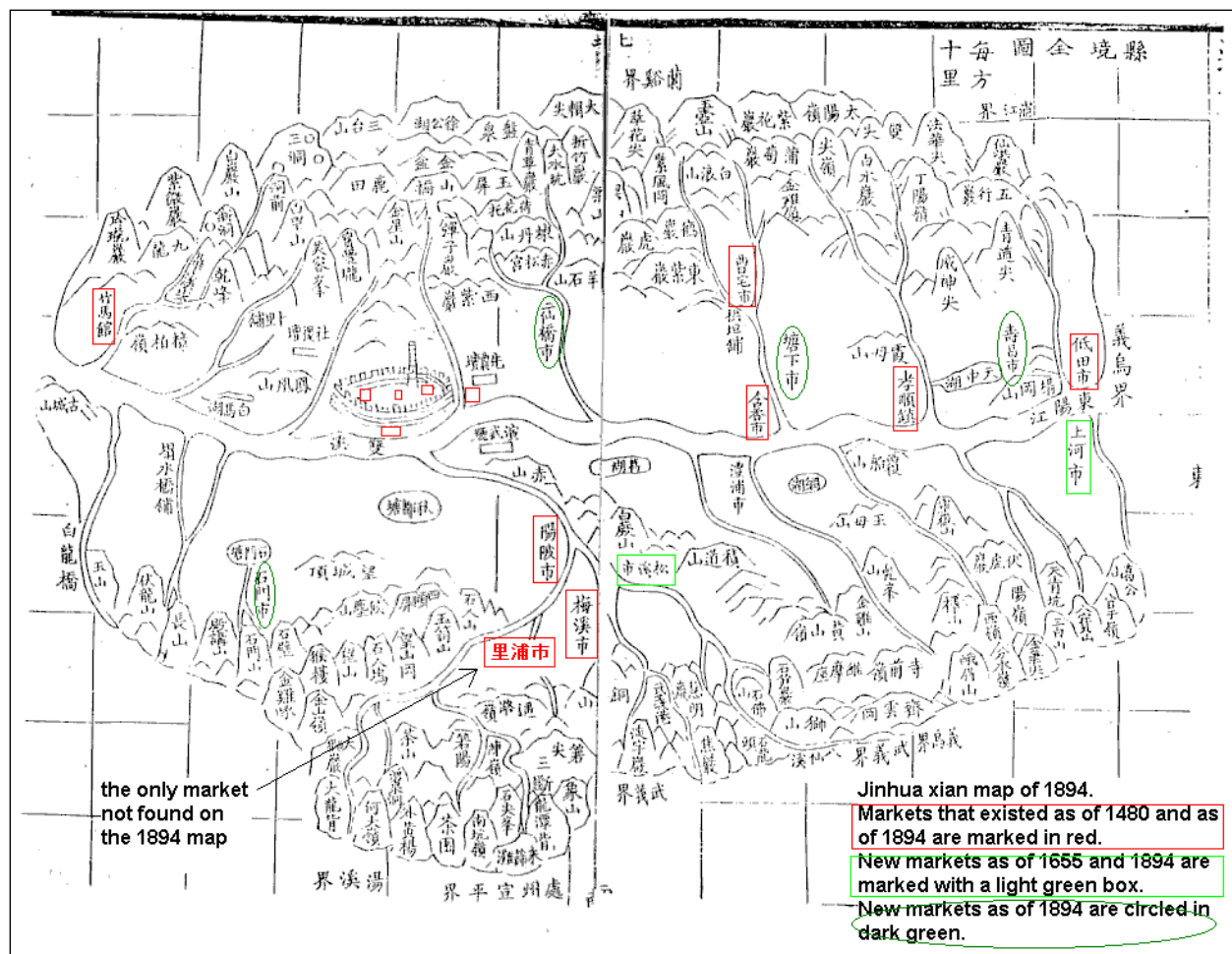


Fig. 20. Markets in Jinhua county, 1480-1894. Sources, *Jinhua fuzhi* (1480 ed.) 2.11b-12a; *Jinhua xianzhi* (1655 ed.) 1.5b-6a; the map is from *Jinhua xianzhi* (1894 ed.).

More to the point, I think, is the longevity of these units. The names of cantons largely date back to the Song period and were not in fact of administrative significance in the Ming and Qing. The names and areas remained despite subcounty administrative changes. Almost all of the oldest recorded market towns kept their names and locations over four centuries, indicating the centers of economic activity also outlasted administrative reorganizations.

The paradox of the local

This paper began by proposing that local history was one way of contesting national historical narratives. It began by considering the contention that whatever could be called “the local” in China’s past was merely an extension of the centrally organized administrative hierarchy, the backbone of a national historical narrative. I have tried to show that geographical writing and cartography recognized that local space existed with reference to other networks, systems, and hierarchies with spatial attributes that overlapped the administrative hierarchy but were not coterminous with it: the physical geography of mountains and rivers, religious networks, kinship networks, and economic systems.

The paradox of this is that the administrative, physical, religious, lineage, and economic attributes which were used to map the local spatially and cognitively were all elements in systems that were regional and national, networks that extended beyond the local. But perhaps this is not as much of a paradox as it first appears. To constitute something as local and historical involves creating something that has meaning through time not only for those inside looking out but also for those outside looking in. In other words, both the residents who live within the place and outsiders who know of the place need to have a way to distinguish it. However, to make distinctions requires shared categories of meaning – it requires that the attributes being heralded as the marks of this place be recognizable to others as something of value. And this very same fact, that there are shared administrative, physical, economic, kinship, and religious categories of meaning, also results in every local place being able to constitute itself both as “belonging to us” and as “showing where we belong” in the larger world. And this ability of the local to define itself to itself and relate itself to others puts it in tension with the claim of national history and the imperial state to exercise command over local resources and values. The ability of the local to appeal to a multiplicity of systems to define itself gives it an endurance that the political state, which defines itself as the only system and seeks to perpetuate itself as a system, has historically been incapable of. When the local discovered it could write its own history it gained a staying power which no dynastic regime has ever matched.

The local as historical subject and GIS

This brings me finally to the question of how we should study local history in the context of contesting the narrative of national history. What will not work, it seems to me, is studies of the local in isolation. In this Skinner is surely right in pointing to the essential importance of seeing historical phenomena in the context of regional systems and cycles. Skinner concludes:

It is precisely the *structure* of Chinese history that renders critical the selection of appropriate units of analysis—territorial systems at the optimal level of the relevant hierarchy through a functionally suitable span of time. For if historical/temporal patterns are indeed systemic, then they may be reliably established—in fact, they can be discerned at all clearly—only when the analysis is focused on or specified for the pertinent system. In this sense too historical analysis is inseparable from regional analysis.⁷⁴

But to do this we need mechanisms for taking data out of the local historical contexts that recorded them and putting them together. And this is where geographic information systems and their combination of spatial analysis and representation and relational databases and statistical analysis is truly invaluable. The strength of a GIS is that it allows us to see multiple networks, to trace their change over time, and to analyze the relationships between them. The China Historical GIS project is building the infrastructure for this.

The China Historical GIS Project (<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~chgis>)

The rationale for the China Historical GIS is that we need a common “base” GIS for Chinese history: a single, common basis which can be used to represent, analyze, and share all Chinese historical data with temporal and spatial attributes. If this can be accomplished then it is possible

⁷⁴ G. William Skinner, “Presidential Address: The Structure of Chinese History”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 44.2 (1985): 271-92 (290).

for users to employ the GIS as a platform for compiling temporal-spatial data and then visually representing and analyzing the spatial relations in their data – whether population reports, tax quotas, military garrisons, or religious institutions. They can analyze that data, test hypotheses about spatial relationships, generate historical maps for research, teaching, and publication, and – because CHGIS is freely available as well as being more accurate than any printed historical map of the same scale – easily share their data with others. CHGIS also makes it possible to create maps and, either by downloading all data or by employing the CHGIS website search engine, search for the location of a given place name and much related information. However, ultimately historical spatial analysis depends upon having access to a wide variety of datasets, so that one can begin to see the correlations between demographic, economic, political, and cultural data.

For a GIS to provide this common basis it takes into account the spatial units that were used to record data in the historical record. In China, in past and present, the government collected data according to its administrative structure. The system of local administrative units was overseen by officials sent from and reporting to the capital. In particular the capital bureaucracy collected data from local units that was essential to maintaining state access to labor and production and, because the court had sophisticated systems for archiving and summarizing the historical, some of this data entered the permanent record. The central government mandated land surveys and household registration, held censuses, and compiled national administrative geographies. All this information was compiled and reported by administrative unit. Although there were regional variations, historical legacies, and special exceptions, the administrative structure is known for more of the time and space of China's history than for any other territory of similar size. This fact has led to two fundamental design decisions: first, to build the GIS around the administrative structure and, second, to keep track of this structure by tracing all changes (in name, location, place in the administrative hierarchy, and area) in administrative units from the founding of a centralized bureaucratic empire in 221 BCE to the end of the imperial period in 1911 CE (in later stages the project will be extended into the present and further into the past).

CHGIS is thus a base GIS because it provides the fundamental database: the record of changes in the administrative units and the changes in the points, lines, and polygons that digitally map them.⁷⁵ At times this has been difficult to explain to scholars who are not already acquainted with how a GIS works. We have had to explain, for example, that before we can provide a GIS dataset with all historical population records – something many would appreciate – we must first correctly identify and locate the administrative units which reported population data; once we have that basis then preparing the population records for spatial analysis is relatively straightforward.⁷⁶ When different research projects use the common base GIS their datasets will be compatible and shareable. A demographer could thus easily share population datasets with the institutional historian who had a dataset of county tax receipts, the economic historian with a dataset of county agricultural products, and the historian of religion with a dataset of cult temples.

⁷⁵ The most important exception to this is the decision to provide historical coastlines and major rivers and canals. This is particularly important in the case of the Yellow River, whose course shifted in major and minor ways.

⁷⁶ Various printed maps exist that claim to show the spatial distribution of population at various points in Chinese history without, however, providing the level of spatial detail that would allow one to check the figures for accuracy. See, for example, Hans Bielenstein, "Chinese Historical Demography, A.D. 2-1982," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 59 (1987): 1-288.

The fundamental task in creating the China Historical GIS project is thus a research task in historical geography: to create an historically accurate common base by providing a reliable record of the administrative units through Chinese history that were used to collect and report information. Despite the existence of important slice-in-time printed historical atlases, the amount of work necessary to accomplish this should not be underestimated; it is only possible because a group of senior cartographically-oriented historical geographers led by Prof. Zou Yilin at the Center for historical Geography at Fudan University, under the direction of Prof. Ge Jianxiong and Man Zhimin, have been willing to devote several years to this project. The research of these scholars, many of whom took part in the making of the Historical Atlas of China under the late director Tan Qixiang, is being preserved in extensive notes, included in the CHGIS database, which quote from primary sources and cite secondary sources.⁷⁷ The examples in Figs. 21 and 22 were generated from the CHGIS database.



Representing the Administrative Hierarchy: Polygons and Points

Spatial representations must make sense to the viewer, but those representations must also make sense in terms of the historical world. This is a practical issue—reconstructing historical boundaries is highly research intensive—and it is a conceptual issue. In the modern West we assume that administrative entities such as counties have clearly defined boundaries and can be represented as bounded territory and this view has been so thoroughly adopted in contemporary cartography that we assume that administrative entities begin with bounded territory. CHGIS

⁷⁷ Tan Qixiang 譚其驤, ed., *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* 中國歷史地圖集, 8 volumes (Shanghai: Ditu chubanshe, 1982–1987).

has made a compromise, in which we try to delineate prefectures with polygons (although the prefectural seat is kept as a separate point) but below that administrative level we only use points to mark county seats and other settlements (except for county boundaries in 1911) as in Fig. 23.

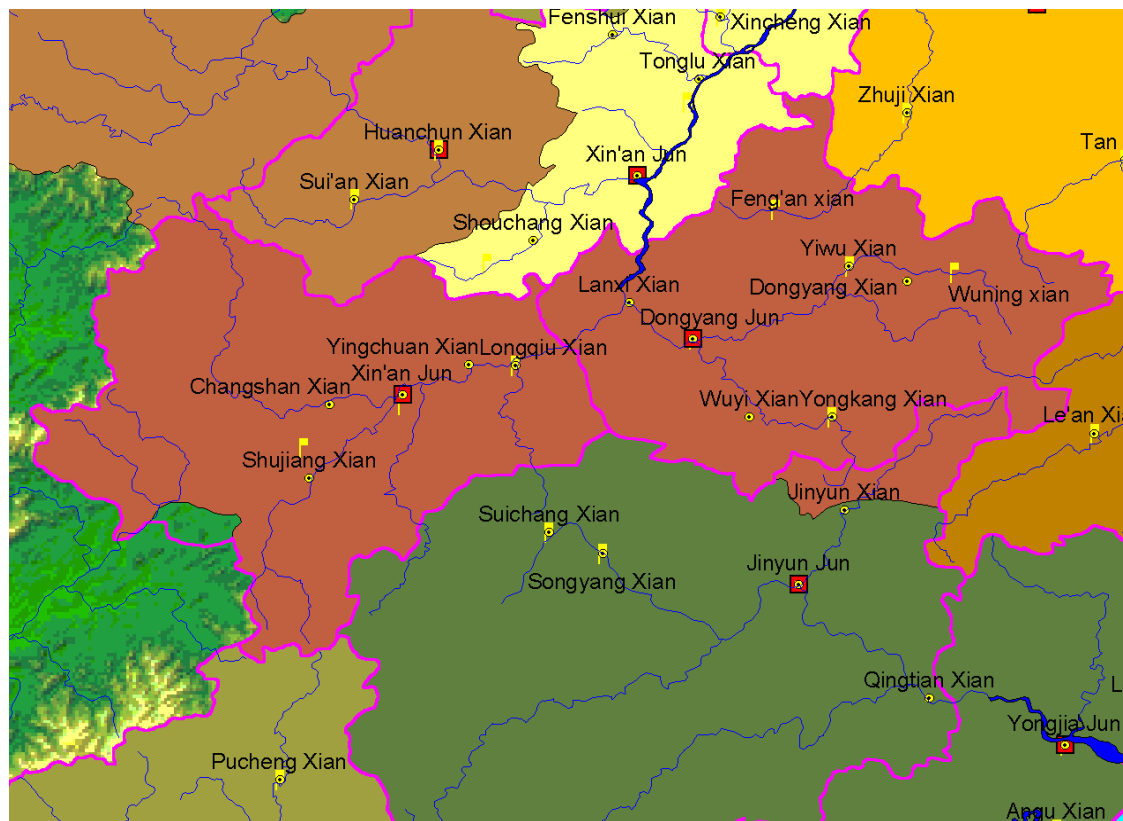


Fig. 23. Dongyang 東陽郡 (central modern Zhejiang province) in 500 and 750

Solid colors = commanderies ("jun" -- equivalent to later prefectures) in 500

Violet lines = commandery boundaries in 750

Red boxes = commandery seats in 750

Yellow flags = county seats in 500

Yellow dots = county seats in 750

The most important of these hierarchies is the system of centrally administered administrative units. Although there were changes in the locations, names, and boundaries of administrative units, there was always an administrative hierarchy, and there are continuities in the information it collected. But this paper has also argued that from a local perspective, a perspective which resulted in the creation of over 8500 editions of local gazetteers and a wealth of data from the Song period into the twentieth century, the administrative hierarchy will ultimately not prove adequate.

We must, I think, make the ultimate goal the inclusion of as many named places as possible. The rivers and mountains of the physical landscape were also continuous through time, yet their names and the meaning attached to them changed. In contrast to mountains river systems are much more like administrative units – there were always rivers but much needs to be done to establish where they were.

Tracing the development of economic hierarchies is of particular importance and the basic infrastructural task in this regard must be the maximization of settlement points, especially market towns. Identifying settlement points will also provide a basis for spatially representing information from genealogies, particularly in those areas where lineages have maintained residences for several centuries.

There is a wealth of information on religious sites which can also be included as named points, although in this case we may have to accept that many shrines, monasteries, cloisters, and temples can only be located in terms of travel distance from a county seat.

If we take seriously the promise of GIS as a means of organizing historical information and if we take seriously the idea that patterns of social and cultural activity are grounded in actual places, then we should begin to plan for it in light of the sources we do have. This means in the first place, I think, that we must begin to think about systematic ways of mining the local gazetteer record. I would suggest work along two lines.

CHGIS will need to maximize the number of settlement points beyond administrative centers and instead of attempting to draw boundaries around them it will be much more important to identify the administrative unit they are part of. Some of this was done in creating the initial 1820 slice-in-time layer, for which about 9000 non-administrative settlements were identified, and in creating the 1911 slice-in-time layer which already includes 14,000 named places for the less than half the county covered to date.⁷⁸ However, ultimately the process of identifying settlements backwards in time will depend on locating places found in lists and maps in local gazetteers.

Second, we can take advantage of the growing standardization of local gazetteers over time, the extraordinary interest in the creation of digital resources in China, and the growing enthusiasm for local history to work out some standard relational database templates for local gazetteers. In other words, rather than beginning by developing a GIS for each place with a local gazetteer we should determine how the information in a gazetteer can be converted into a database which can then be tied to a GIS. We should hope that this will encourage local initiatives in compatible formats. As the content of more gazetteers come on line, we can begin to determine where we should devote resources to extending the GIS to include them.

⁷⁸ However, due to the way in which these points were digitized the county to which they belonged was not immediately identified. This is not an issue for the 1911 data thanks to the inclusion of county borders.